

From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Fwd: checking in on 02608
Date: Wednesday, July 17, 2019 22:29:05

Bob, see the response below ...

Begin forwarded message:

From: (b) (6) (b) (6) >
Date: July 17, 2019 at 7:57:41 PM EDT
To: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Subject: Re: checking in on 02608

Hi Michael,

How are you mate? No, I still have not unpacked the aircraft. I have not been able to generate the money to set up a warehouse and get started. I have made the decision to sell the aircraft and I am currently in the middle of a deal to send the aircraft back to USA. If the deal goes through, I will inform you of where she is headed. At this stage the deal has not gone through, but it is promising. If it does go through then it looks like Susie-Q will end up back in the air! Which I think is very exciting.

I will keep you informed as to what is happening. I had already planned to contact you if the sale goes through.

Best regards,

(b) (6)

On Thu, Jul 18, 2019 at 4:27 AM Michael Wyrick (b) (6) > wrote:

Hi (b) (6)

It's been awhile since we last chatted and I thought I would check in on you and our Susie-Q!! How are you both doing?

Is she still in storage or have you been able to begin working on her?

All the best,

Michael

On Jul 3, 2017, at 11:11 PM, (b) (6) (b) (6) > wrote:

Hi Michael,

Thanks for your email. I've been getting up to date with the history of 2nd Lt Bennett and the search for the aircraft. I'm about half way through reading the search for the lost blacksheep.

Currently the aircraft has gone into storage where it will remain for up to 12 months until I can secure a location to unpack it. Once it is unpacked, yourself and anyone connected to aircraft are welcome to come and see it.

Something quite interesting about 02608 is that it was wearing 2 different paint jobs on it's last day flying.

On the port side it is #19 and has the pre july 43 roundel with no bars

on the starboard side it is #88 and has the post august 43 star and bars.

I have attached some photos.

02608 will not donate any parts. It is my intent to get her back up on her feet and I already have parts from other aircraft to contribute towards that. Whether 02608 flies again is another issue, but is on the table.

My plan is to finish the aircraft as #88 in the 3 colour scheme you see in the photos and with the permission of the Bennett family, call her Susie-Q.

But I don't want to promise that yet, in-case I am not the one to finish the project. If for any reason it is sold or moves on, I lose the power to make that decision, so I don't want to mention it to the Bennett family, but as long as I own it, that is the plan. (I'm sure any new owner would want to honour the heritage anyway). I have no plans of selling, I'm just realistic that these things take time and time changes everything!

Best regards,

(b) (6)

Michael Wyrick MN'08
Member, Board of Directors
Past Vice Chair & Membership Director
Explorers Club Washington Group (ECWG)
Cell: (b) (6)
www.explorers.org

<ECSeal.161001.JPG-4 copy.jpg>

From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Fwd: US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608
Date: Thursday, April 02, 2020 9:15:04
Attachments: [Wayland Bennett Tribute.pdf](#)
[ATT00001.htm](#)

Dr. Neyland,

Please be advised of the following email I sent to Secretary Modly regarding Corsair BuNo. 02608.

I just didn't want you or your team to be caught off guard in any way. I sent a couple of others which I will forward to you as well.

Best regards,

Michael

Begin forwarded message:

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Subject: US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608
Date: April 1, 2020 at 7:30:58 PM EDT
To: (b) (6) navy.mil
Cc: Board President Texarkana Museums
<boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org>

Thomas B. Modly
Acting Secretary of the Navy
Office of the Acting Secretary of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon, Room 4D652
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Secretary Modly,

I am writing to you today to seek your support in preserving the remains of a United States Navy/Marine Corps aircraft which crashed in 1943, tragically taking the life of its young aviator and serving as his sacred tomb for the next 51 years. WWII Marine fighter pilot, 2Lt. Wayland Edward Bennett, USMCR, was missing but never forgotten.

- Aircraft: F4U-1 Corsair, US Navy BuNo 02608 (VMF-214 "Black Sheep")
- Aviator: 2Lt. Wayland Edward Bennett, USMCR
- Crash Date: 22OCT43
- Crash Site: Espiritu Santo island in the New Hebrides (now, the Republic of

Vanuatu)

- Excavation & Recovery: Conducted by CIL-HI in 1994; aviator's remains were returned to US and burial ceremony conducted in aviator's hometown of Texarkana, Texas in 1994

BACKGROUND:

In 1988 and 1989, I had the great honor of serving as a member of two expeditionary teams in search of Lt. Bennett. These search teams were formed by members of his hometown of Texarkana, Texas & Arkansas. Our search was conducted in the Republic of Vanuatu with the full cooperation and at the direction of the aviator's family members and friends.

In 1994, six years and four expeditions later, the aircraft was ultimately uncovered by local loggers which notified our team leader, who then informed the US Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CIL-HI). CIL-HI dispatched a team to the islands to conduct an excavation of the site that same year and return Lt. Bennett's remains to Texarkana for a proper military burial.

After 51 years, Lt. Bennett was returning home to the United States. His return was ceremoniously marked by a parade down the main street in our hometown. A caisson carrying his flag draped coffin was flanked by U.S. Marines, veterans, and search team members and was carried to where he would be laid to rest beside generations of his family who had preceded him in death. Sadly, this included the aviator's twin sister, who had provided moral and financial support to the search team and lived just long enough to learn that her brother was found, yet she passed away before his remains were repatriated. As a bugle sounded Taps in the distance, Lt. Bennett's former squadron, VMF-214, conducted a salute in the form of a burial flyover in missing man formation.

In 2015, on a return to Vanuatu as a disaster relief volunteer, I reconnected with local villagers whom had assisted our teams' expeditions in the 80s and 90s. During the visit, a missionary informed me that an Australian private museum owner had recently negotiated a deal to purchase and excavate the fuselage of Lt. Bennett's Corsair from the jungle. This Corsair, which Lt. Bennett affectionately named "Susie-Q" (after his mother) was crated, shipped and later displayed in this private museum while being used to aid in the construction of a replica Corsair fighter.

After making contact with the museum's owner, I learned that the fuselage was only being used as reference for their project and afterward it would be sold to recover expenses. The museum owner assured me that no parts were being removed from the aircraft and even expressed interest in seeing it repatriated to the United States one day, where members of Lt. Bennett's family and community could frequently visit it. I immediately reached out to the Bennett family to keep them apprised. Unfortunately, it was instead sold to another Australian collector only to be stored inside a shipping container for the next several years.

This current collector in possession of "Susie-Q" claims to be negotiating a sale to a

collector/restorer in the United States. My concern, and the concern of many of Lt. Bennett's family members with whom I have corresponded, is that 'restoration' or private collection could see this aircraft significantly altered to the point that it loses its integrity and no longer appears as 2Lt. Bennett's aircraft and memorializes his sacrifice. Also, with the possibility of it being flown, it could crash again further adding to the family's hardship. We instead feel that the appropriate place for this plane, since already disturbed from its resting place in Vanuatu, should therefore be in a proper museum.

REQUEST:

Secretary Modly, I respectfully request your assistance in honoring this fallen warrior, his family and his community, by respecting the memory of Lt. Bennett by not allowing the commercial exploitation of the aircraft in which he lost his life. I, therefore, request your assistance in (1) maintaining the Navy's ownership of this aircraft and (2) seeking cooperation with the Australian government to help secure and return the aircraft to the United States for display in a museum thereby allowing "Susie-Q" to remain in her current state as a 'symbol of remembrance' for the sacrifice made by this family's loved one.

The President of the Board of the Texarkana Museums System in Lt. Bennett's hometown, Ms. Velvet Hall Cool, (copied) has expressed her Board's interest in receiving and curating the remains of this aircraft in which this community's favorite son had been interred for more than half a century, should it find its way back to the United States.

Very Sincerely,

Michael

Michael Wyrick

Team Leader, 1989 Wayland Bennett MIA Search Expedition
Team Member, 1988 Wayland Bennett MIA Search Expedition

Member, NESA World Explorer Program Subcommittee
National Eagle Scout Association

Member, Board of Directors / Past Vice Chair / Past Membership Director
Explorers Club Washington Group
The Explorers Club (Founded 1904)
Cell: (b) (6)
www.explorers.org

Congressional Tributes:

- US Rep. Steve Largent's Floor Speech Tribute to 2Lt. Wayland Bennett:
<https://www.congress.gov/104/crec/1995/05/24/CREC-1995-05-24-pt1-PgE1107.pdf>
- US Senator Dale Bumpers's Floor Speech Tribute to 2Lt. Wayland Bennett:

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1994-pt21/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1994-pt21-6-1.pdf>

Museum Interested in Receiving and Curating Lt. Bennett's Corsair (02608):

- Texarkana Museums System: <http://www.texarkanamuseum.org>

(You may either click the links, or copy and paste URL into your own browser to securely view.)

From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Fwd: US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608
Date: Thursday, April 02, 2020 9:14:10
Attachments: [Wayland Bennett Tribute.pdf](#)
[ATT00001.htm](#)

Dr. Neyland,

Please be advised of the following email I sent to CNO Gilday regarding Corsair BuNo. 02608.

I just didn't want you or your team to be caught off guard in any way. I sent a couple of others which I will forward to you as well.

Best regards,

Michael

Begin forwarded message:

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Subject: US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608
Date: April 1, 2020 at 7:19:29 PM EDT
To: (b) (6) navy.mil
Cc: Board President Texarkana Museums
<boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org>

Admiral Michael Gilday
Chief of Naval Operations
1200 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350-1200

Dear Admiral Gilday,

I am writing to you today to seek your support in preserving the remains of a United States Navy/Marine Corps aircraft which crashed in 1943, tragically taking the life of its young aviator and serving as his sacred tomb for the next 51 years. WWII Marine fighter pilot, 2Lt. Wayland Edward Bennett, USMCR, was missing but never forgotten.

- Aircraft: F4U-1 Corsair, US Navy BuNo 02608 (VMF-214 "Black Sheep")
- Aviator: 2Lt. Wayland Edward Bennett, USMCR
- Crash Date: 22OCT43
- Crash Site: Espiritu Santo island in the New Hebrides (now, the Republic of Vanuatu)
- Excavation & Recovery: Conducted by CIL-HI in 1994; aviator's remains were

returned to US and burial ceremony conducted in aviator's hometown of Texarkana, Texas in 1994

BACKGROUND:

In 1988 and 1989, I had the great honor of serving as a member of two expeditionary teams in search of Lt. Bennett. These search teams were formed by members of his hometown of Texarkana, Texas & Arkansas. Our search was conducted in the Republic of Vanuatu with the full cooperation and at the direction of the aviator's family members and friends.

In 1994, six years and four expeditions later, the aircraft was ultimately uncovered by local loggers which notified our team leader, who then informed the US Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CIL-HI). CIL-HI dispatched a team to the islands to conduct an excavation of the site that same year and return Lt. Bennett's remains to Texarkana for a proper military burial.

After 51 years, Lt. Bennett was returning home to the United States. His return was ceremoniously marked by a parade down the main street in our hometown. A caisson carrying his flag draped coffin was flanked by U.S. Marines, veterans, and search team members and was carried to where he would be laid to rest beside generations of his family who had preceded him in death. Sadly, this included the aviator's twin sister, who had provided moral and financial support to the search team and lived just long enough to learn that her brother was found, yet she passed away before his remains were repatriated. As a bugle sounded Taps in the distance, Lt. Bennett's former squadron, VMF-214, conducted a salute in the form of a burial flyover in missing man formation.

In 2015, on a return to Vanuatu as a disaster relief volunteer, I reconnected with local villagers whom had assisted our teams' expeditions in the 80s and 90s. During the visit, a missionary informed me that an Australian private museum owner had recently negotiated a deal to purchase and excavate the fuselage of Lt. Bennett's Corsair from the jungle. This Corsair, which Lt. Bennett affectionately named "Susie-Q" (after his mother) was crated, shipped and later displayed in this private museum while being used to aid in the construction of a replica Corsair fighter.

After making contact with the museum's owner, I learned that the fuselage was only being used as reference for their project and afterward it would be sold to recover expenses. The museum owner assured me that no parts were being removed from the aircraft and even expressed interest in seeing it repatriated to the United States one day, where members of Lt. Bennett's family and community could frequently visit it. I immediately reached out to the Bennett family to keep them apprised. Unfortunately, it was instead sold to another Australian collector only to be stored inside a shipping container for the next several years.

This current collector in possession of "Susie-Q" claims to be negotiating a sale to a collector/restorer in the United States. My concern, and the concern of many of Lt.

Bennett's family members with whom I have corresponded, is that 'restoration' or private collection could see this aircraft significantly altered to the point that it loses its integrity and no longer appears as 2Lt. Bennett's aircraft and memorializes his sacrifice. Also, with the possibility of it being flown, it could crash again further adding to the family's hardship. We instead feel that the appropriate place for this plane, since already disturbed from its resting place in Vanuatu, should therefore be in a proper museum.

REQUEST:

Admiral Gilday, I respectfully request your assistance in honoring this fallen warrior, his family and his community, by respecting the memory of Lt. Bennett by not allowing the commercial exploitation of the aircraft in which he lost his life. I, therefore, request your assistance in (1) maintaining the Navy's ownership of this aircraft and (2) seeking cooperation with the Australian government to help secure and return the aircraft to the United States for display in a museum thereby allowing "Susie-Q" to remain in her current state as a 'symbol of remembrance' for the sacrifice made by this family's loved one.

The President of the Board of the Texarkana Museums System in Lt. Bennett's hometown, Ms. Velvet Hall Cool, (copied) has expressed her Board's interest in receiving and curating the remains of this aircraft in which this community's favorite son had been interred for more than half a century, should it find its way back to the United States.

Very Sincerely,

Michael

Michael Wyrick

Team Leader, 1989 Wayland Bennett MIA Search Expedition
Team Member, 1988 Wayland Bennett MIA Search Expedition

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Museum Interested in Receiving and Curating Lt. Bennett's Corsair (02608):

- Texarkana Museums System: <http://www.texarkanamuseum.org>

(You may either click the links, or copy and paste URL into your own browser to securely view.)

From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Fwd: USN/USMC Corsair BuNo. 02608
Date: Friday, April 03, 2020 16:29:54

Dr. Neyland,

Please be advised.

Regards,

Michael

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Pardo, Anna" (b) (6) [usmcu.edu](mailto:(b) (6)@usmcu.edu)>
Subject: Re: USN/USMC Corsair BuNo. 02608
Date: April 3, 2020 at 3:27:08 PM EDT
To: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>

Dear Mr. Wyrick,
Thank you for your email. I'm acknowledging receipt and wanted to let you know that we are working with the Navy on the appropriate course of action.

Kind regards,
Annie

Annie Pardo
Director
National Museum of the Marine Corps

18900 Jefferson Davis Hwy
Triangle, VA 22172-1938

Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)
(b) (6) [usmcu.edu](mailto:(b) (6)@usmcu.edu)

www.usmcmuseum.com
www.facebook.com/USMCMuseum
Instagram: @USMCMuseum

On Wed, Apr 1, 2020 at 7:19 PM Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)> wrote:

Annie Pardo
Director
National Museum of the Marine Corps
18900 Jefferson Davis Hwy

Triangle, VA 22172-1938

Dear Ms. Pardo,

I am writing to you today to seek your support in preserving the remains of a United States Navy/Marine Corps aircraft which crashed in 1943, tragically taking the life of its young aviator and serving as his sacred tomb for the next 51 years. WWII Marine fighter pilot, 2Lt. Wayland Edward Bennett, USMCR, was missing but never forgotten.

- Aircraft: F4U-1 Corsair, US Navy BuNo 02608 (VMF-214 "Black Sheep")
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Michael Wyrick MN'08
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From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Fwd: USN/USMC Corsair BuNo. 02608
Date: Thursday, April 02, 2020 9:11:35
Attachments: [Wayland Bennett Tribute.pdf](#)
[ATT00001.htm](#)
[ATT00002.htm](#)

Dr. Neyland,

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Best regards,

Michael

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From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Subject: USN/USMC Corsair BuNo. 02608
Date: April 1, 2020 at 7:19:37 PM EDT
To: (b) (6) [usmcu.edu](#)
Cc: Board President Texarkana Museums
<boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org>

Annie Pardo
Director
National Museum of the Marine Corps
18900 Jefferson Davis Hwy
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Michael

Michael Wyrick

Team Leader, 1989 Wayland Bennett MIA Search Expedition
Team Member, 1988 Wayland Bennett MIA Search Expedition

Member, NESA World Explorer Program Subcommittee
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The Explorers Club (Founded 1904)

Cell: (b) (6)

www.explorers.org

From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Cc: [Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: checking in on 02608
Date: Thursday, July 18, 2019 12:59:20
Attachments: [GA logo_sm.bmp](#)

Bob,

I just received a call from the Board President of the Texarkana Museums System and she said that would 100% be interested in receiving and properly displaying 02608, should it be possible to repatriate stateside.

Please let me know once your team determines how it will proceed and I will keep you posted on any developments from my side.

Best regards,

Michael

On Jul 18, 2019, at 12:38 PM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)> wrote:

Michael

Thanks again for your help. It was very timely.

All the Best

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6) >
Sent: Thursday, July 18, 2019 12:30 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>
Cc: Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA)
<(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: checking in on 02608

Happy to be involved, Bob. Thank you again for alerting me to the web posting.

I'm sure that we could place it with either the Texarkana Museums System or the D.A. Carson US Marine Corp Reserve Training Center in Texarkana. D.A. Carson was a high school buddy of Bennett's and he was instrumental in organizing our searches in the 80s. I've written to the new museum board president (a former classmate of mine) to pitch the idea to her and propose the museum building or the Texarkana Airport as a venue.

I'll let you know what I hear back.

Best,

Michael

On Jul 18, 2019, at 8:06 AM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) (b) (6) <(b) (6)@navy.mil> wrote:

Thank you Michael for researching this. It is a huge help to us to know where the aircraft is located. I am not sure what our course of action will be but knowing where the aircraft is located and who the owner is helps.

Did we ever determine if a Museum might be interested in it?

Best

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>

Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2019 10:29 PM

To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>

Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Fwd: checking in on 02608

Bob, see the response below ...

Begin forwarded message:

From: (b) (6) (b) (6) >
Date: July 17, 2019 at 7:57:41 PM EDT
To: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Subject: Re: checking in on 02608

Hi Michael,

How are you mate? No, I still have not unpacked the aircraft. I have not been able to generate the money to set up a warehouse and get started. I have made the decision to sell the aircraft and I am currently in the middle of a deal to send the aircraft back to USA. If the deal goes through, I will inform you of where she is headed. At this stage the deal has not gone through, but it is promising. If it does go through then it looks like Susie-Q will end up back in the air! Which I think is very exciting.

I will keep you informed as to what is happening. I had already planned to contact you if the sale goes through.

Best regards,

(b) (6)

On Thu, Jul 18, 2019 at 4:27 AM Michael Wyrick

<(b) (6)> wrote:

Hi (b) (6)

It's been awhile since we last chatted and I thought I would check in on you and our Susie-Q!! How are you both doing?

Is she still in storage or have you been able to begin working on her?

All the best,

Michael

On Jul 3, 2017, at 11:11 PM, (b) (6)
(b) (6) <(b) (6)>
wrote:

Hi Michael,

Thanks for your email. I've been getting up to date with the history of 2nd Lt Bennett and the search for the aircraft. I'm about half way through reading the search

for the lost blacksheep.

Currently the aircraft has gone into storage where it will remain for up to 12 months until I can secure a location to unpack it. Once it is unpacked, yourself and anyone connected to aircraft are welcome to come and see it.

Something quite interesting about 02608 is that it was wearing 2 different paint jobs on it's last day flying.

On the port side it is #19 and has the pre july 43 roundel with no bars

on the starboard side it is #88 and has the post august 43 star and bars.

I have attached some photos.

02608 will not donate any parts. It is my intent to get her back up on her feet and I already have parts from other aircraft to contribute towards that. Whether 02608 flies again is another issue, but is on the table.

My plan is to finish the aircraft as #88 in the 3 colour scheme you see in the photos and with the permission of the Bennett family, call her Susie-Q.

But I don't want to promise that yet, in-case I am not the one to finish the project. If for any reason it is sold or moves on, I lose the power to make that decision, so I don't want to mention it to the Bennett family, but as long as I own it, that is the plan. (I'm sure any new owner would want to honour the heritage anyway). I have no plans of selling, I'm just realistic that these things take time and time changes everything!

Best regards,

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Michael Wyrick MN'08
Member, Board of Directors
Past Vice Chair & Membership Director

Explorers Club Washington Group (ECWG)

Cell: (b) (6)

www.explorers.org

<ECSeal.161001.JPG-4 copy.jpg>

Michael Wyrick, Principal

Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)

<image001.png>

Michael Wyrick, Principal

Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)



From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Cc: [Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: checking in on 02608
Date: Thursday, July 18, 2019 12:30:01
Attachments: [GA logo_sm.bmp](#)

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I'm sure that we could place it with either the Texarkana Museums System or the D.A. Carson US Marine Corp Reserve Training Center in Texarkana. D.A. Carson was a high school buddy of Bennett's and he was instrumental in organizing our searches in the 80s. I've written to the new museum board president (a former classmate of mine) to pitch the idea to her and propose the museum building or the Texarkana Airport as a venue.

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Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

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Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2019 10:29 PM
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Michael Wyrick MN'08
Member, Board of Directors
Past Vice Chair & Membership Director
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Cell: (b) (6)
www.explorers.org

<ECSeal.161001.JPG-4 copy.jpg>

Michael Wyrick, Principal
Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)



From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
Cc: [Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#); [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft
Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2020 12:20:08
Attachments: [GA logo_sm.bmp](#)

Absolutely, thank you Alexis.

On Mar 11, 2020, at 12:11 PM, Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)> wrote:

Thank you Michael,

I have forwarded this on up to leadership. There appears to be consensus among those expressing a view that they would like to see the remains of the aircraft returned to Texarkana, in a museum, as is.

Very Respectfully,

Alexis

ALEXIS CATSAMBIS PhD RPA

UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY BRANCH
NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND
805 Kidder Breese St, SE, Washington, D.C. 20374-5060
Tel: (b) (6) / Email: (b) (6) [navy.mil](#)
<http://www.history.navy.mil/research/underwater-archaeology.html>

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6) >
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2020 5:33 PM
To: Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA)
(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)>
Cc: Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA)
<(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)>; Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
<(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft

Alexis,

If it is of any help, I've attached a pdf with screenshots of the family's responses within a Facebook Group for friends and family of Lt. Bennett.

Best regards,

Michael

On Mar 10, 2020, at 4:23 PM, Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6) navy.mil> wrote:

Good afternoon Michael,

Thank you for your note and for sharing the information below – it is most appreciated and has reached us in time to be referenced in the upcoming meeting.

I am certain Bob will follow up with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Alexis

ALEXIS CATSAMBIS PhD RPA

UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY BRANCH

NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

805 Kidder Breese St, SE, Washington, D.C. 20374-5060

Tel: (b) (6) / Email: (b) (6) navy.mil

<http://www.history.navy.mil/research/underwater-archaeology.html>

From: Michael Wyrick (b) (6) >

Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2020 9:30 AM

To: Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA)

<(b) (6) navy.mil>; Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6) navy.mil>

Cc: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6) navy.mil>

Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft

Hi Blair and Alexis,

Per Bob's email last week, I wanted to inform you both that to date, I have heard back from 12 members of 2Lt. Wayland Bennett's family and all of them have expressed interest in seeing the plane, if repatriated, sent to his hometown of Texarkana, TX, and put on display at the Texarkana Historical Museum. I have also attached the email I received on Friday from the museum's Board President.

I have encouraged all the family members to write letters to their Congressional members and to the NHHC. Hopefully, this will show adequate support for the effort of preservation. Can you tell me when your meeting with Rep Graves is scheduled? If later in the week, perhaps we could get you some letters prior to the meeting.

Best regards,

Michael

On Mar 6, 2020, at 8:17 AM, Neyland, Robert S CIV
USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)

<(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)> wrote:

Hi Michael

Glad to hear you are (b) (6)

Congratulations on (b) (6)

<image001.jpg>

As mentioned we are getting a lot pressure from Rep. Graves of Missouri as he is a flying restored aircraft buff and he is particularly interested in helping a US individual obtain this aircraft for restoration and flight. We also discovered that although DPAA visited site in 1990s and did a recovery that it was cursory and only lasted a few days. A better recovery job could have been redone if this aircraft had not been disturbed.

I will be out of US for next few weeks and will have intermittent email access. Please copy Alexis and Blair on what you find out as there is a meeting with Rep Graves this week.

All the Best

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>

Sent: Thursday, March 05, 2020 7:36 PM

To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM

(USA) <(b) (6) navy.mil>

Cc: Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHHC WASHINGTON DC

(USA) <(b) (6) navy.mil>; Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN

NHHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6) navy.mil>

Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft

Bob,

My apologies, I owe you a response on this from some time back.

(b) (6) been distracted as (b) (6) soon after we last spoke and I dropped the ball on this.

Will follow up on this right away with the family and museum as discussed and get back to you. Thanks for your patience.

Best regards,

Michael

Michael Wyrick | Principal

Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Mobile: (b) (6)



On Mar 5, 2020, at 9:50 AM, Neyland, Robert S
CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)

<(b) (6) navy.mil> wrote:

Michael

We have not spoken in a while. If you have time to talk, I would like to update you on what is occurring with BUNO 02608. A Congressman would like Navy to abandon this aircraft so a warbird restorer could purchase and restore it to a flying aircraft. We would be interested to

know how the family would react to this, if there were interest in the aircraft being in a museum instead, or would prefer some other disposition.

v/r

Bob

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Naval History and Heritage Command
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Office: (b) (6)
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Michael Wyrick, Principal
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(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)

<image002.png>

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Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)

<image001.png>

Michael Wyrick, Principal
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(b) (6)

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From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
Cc: [Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#); [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft
Date: Tuesday, March 10, 2020 16:32:53
Attachments: [GA logo_sm.bmp](#)

Great, thank you for letting me know, Alexis.

Good luck in your meeting.

Regards,

Michael

On Mar 10, 2020, at 4:23 PM, Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) [\(b\) \(6\) navy.mil](#)> wrote:

Good afternoon Michael,

Thank you for your note and for sharing the information below – it is most appreciated and has reached us in time to be referenced in the upcoming meeting.

I am certain Bob will follow up with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Alexis

ALEXIS CATSAMBIS PhD RPA

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NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND
805 Kidder Breese St, SE, Washington, D.C. 20374-5060
Tel: [\(b\) \(6\)](#) / Email: [\(b\) \(6\) navy.mil](#)
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From: Michael Wyrick <[\(b\) \(6\)](#)>
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2020 9:30 AM
To: Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) [\(b\) \(6\) navy.mil](#)>; Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <[\(b\) \(6\) navy.mil](#)>
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I have encouraged all the family members to write letters to their Congressional members and to the NHHC. Hopefully, this will show adequate support for the effort of preservation. Can you tell me when your meeting with Rep Graves is scheduled? If later in the week, perhaps we could get you some letters prior to the meeting.

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Hi Michael

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Congratulations on (b) (6)

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As mentioned we are getting a lot pressure from Rep. Graves of Missouri as he is a flying restored aircraft buff and he is particularly interested in helping a US individual obtain this aircraft for restoration and flight. We also discovered that although DPAA visited site in 1990s and did a recovery that it was cursory and only lasted a few days. A better recovery job could have been redone if this aircraft had not been disturbed.

I will be out of US for next few weeks and will have intermittent email access. Please copy Alexis and Blair on what you find out as there is a meeting with Rep Graves this week.

All the Best

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Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command

805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Sent: Thursday, March 05, 2020 7:36 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
<(b) (6)@navy.mil>
Cc: Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA)
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Michael Wyrick | Principal
Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Mobile: (b) (6)



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(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)

<image002.png>

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From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#); [Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
Cc: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft
Date: Tuesday, March 10, 2020 9:30:03
Attachments: [GA logo_sm.bmp](#)

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(b) (6)

Mobile: (b) (6)



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Michael Wyrick, Principal
Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)



From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft
Date: Friday, March 06, 2020 15:11:30
Attachments: [GA logo_sm.bmp](#)

Great, can't wait to hear all about it ... let's grab that beer when you get back!

On Mar 6, 2020, at 3:07 PM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)> wrote:

Thank you Michael. Headed out on an interesting project if Corona doesn't cancel it.

Will fill you in when I am back.

All the Best

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6) >
Sent: Friday, March 06, 2020 2:48 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft

Thanks for sharing that, Bob. I completely understand and will keep that with us.

By the way, I've already heard back from three family members who have expressed interest in seeing the plane ultimately reach the museum in Texarkana. I'll coordinate with them to draft letters as you and I had previously discussed.

God speed next week!

On Mar 6, 2020, at 2:26 PM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)> wrote:

Michael

That info about the recovery being cursory is a back channel DPAA observation that I probably should not repeat. My understanding is they only had 2 or 3 days and did not have an archaeologist with them. Also done in 1990s and they do a more thorough job now.

So might use your judgement on passing that on.

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick (b) (6) >
Sent: Friday, March 06, 2020 12:25 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6) navy.mil>
Cc: Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6) navy.mil>; Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6) navy.mil>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft

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Thank you again for following this up with me. I regret that I let more time pass on this, but hopefully we can generate enough interest quickly to give you a broader picture before your meeting.

I wish you safe and adventurous travels over the next few weeks and look forward to catching on your return.

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On Mar 6, 2020, at 8:17 AM, Neyland, Robert S CIV
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Congratulations on (b) (6)

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All the Best

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From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>

Sent: Thursday, March 05, 2020 7:36 PM

To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM

(USA) <(b) (6) navy.mil>

Cc: Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHHC WASHINGTON DC

(USA) <(b) (6) navy.mil>; Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN

NHHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6) navy.mil>

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Best regards,

Michael

Michael Wyrick | Principal

Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Mobile: (b) (6)



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<image001.png>

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From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft
Date: Friday, March 06, 2020 14:48:14
Attachments: [GA logo_sm.bmp](#)

Thanks for sharing that, Bob. I completely understand and will keep that with us.

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God speed next week!

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(b) (6)

Mobile: (b) (6)



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Michael Wyrick, Principal
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(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)

<image001.png>

Michael Wyrick, Principal
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(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)



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To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Cc: [Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#); [Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft
Date: Friday, March 06, 2020 12:25:36
Attachments: [GA logo_sm.bmp](#)

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Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft

Bob,

My apologies, I owe you a response on this from some time back.

Just landed from Istanbul... been distracted as my company was awarded a DLA fuel contract in Iraq soon after we last spoke and I dropped the ball on this.

Will follow up on this right away with the family and museum as discussed and get back to you. Thanks for your patience.

Best regards,

Michael

Michael Wyrick | Principal
Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Mobile: (b) (6)



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NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <robert.neyland@navy.mil> wrote:

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(b) (6)

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From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
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Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft
Date: Thursday, March 05, 2020 19:36:25

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Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command

805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Question regarding restoring aircraft for flight and FAA certification
Date: Monday, May 18, 2020 15:24:27

Good copy, thanks Bob. If Buddy is right about new plates, that would be disturbing, eh?

On May 18, 2020, at 2:44 PM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) (b) (6) [navy.mil](#)> wrote:


Michael

See below. I am trying to also verify this from an aircraft archaeologist and Museum advisor regarding WWII aircraft.

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

(b) (6)



Michael Wyrick MN'08
Member, Board of Directors
Past Vice Chair & Membership Director
Explorers Club Washington Group (ECWG)
Cell: (b) (6)
www.explorers.org



From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft
Date: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 17:03:46
Attachments: [GA logo_sm.bmp](#)

Bob,

Out of curiosity, I checked this link again and found it has now been removed. I also checked the site's "sales log" for 2019 and it does NOT list 02608 as being sold.

Will check in with the owner in Victoria and see if there has been any movement. Will revert back.

All my best,

Michael

On Jul 17, 2019, at 3:12 PM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)> wrote:

Michael

Thank you for the quick reply. Yes, we believe it is the same aircraft and it apparently is up for sale by an American firm in Illinois. We are trying to determine if it is physically in the U.S. or still in Victoria and if this firm is the owner or the broker. Below is the link we have:

<http://courtesyaircraft.com/aircraft/vought-sikorski-f4u-1-birdcage-corsair-project-package/>

I would appreciate your thoughts.

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
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Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6) >
Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2019 2:20 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
<(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)>

Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft

Hi Bob,

Great to hear from you, my friend.

I assume you're referring to Bu 02608 Corsair F4U-1 (2LT Wayland Bennett's plane)?

If so, I haven't heard if there has been any change, but will send a message to the guy who had purchased it from the museum in Adelaide. Last reported (May 2018) it was still in his storage container in Victoria.

Let me know your thoughts on this or if you're referring to another a/c that Agustin had inquired about.

All the best,

Michael

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wrote:

Dear Michael

It has been awhile since we talked. I am emailing you to see if you have any new information regarding the aircraft that was recovered from Vanuatu and sold to an individual in Australia and now is for sale in the U.S. We are trying to look into this and determine a course of action.

Any insights you might have would be useful.

All the Best

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(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)

<image001.png>

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(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)



From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft
Date: Wednesday, July 17, 2019 15:40:26
Attachments: [GA logo_sm.bmp](#)

Wow! No doubt about it, Bob — that's her! Four of the photos match the ones I have and they were taken inside the Classic Jets Fighter Museum in Adelaide. It also includes the storyboard which was created by Classic Jets museum.

The last I knew, the museum sold it to (b) (6) in Victoria. He was planning to store it for about 12 months (this was summer 2017) and stated he had no plans to sell it, but was planning to restore it.

I just sent (b) (6) an email asking the status of the a/c and whether still in his possession. I'll see what he comes back with and then begin inquiring further if he is cagey about it. Will just tell him a friend saw it posted for sale and see what I can get out of him.

Let me know if you would like to help shape the message to him.

Thanks,

Michael

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(b) (6)

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<image001.png>

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To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft
Date: Wednesday, July 17, 2019 14:20:32
Attachments: [GA logo_sm.bmp](#)

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Office: (b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)

Michael Wyrick, Principal

Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)



From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Cox, Samuel J SES USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(US\)](#)
Cc: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#); [Board President Texarkana Museums](#)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608
Date: Wednesday, April 01, 2020 19:21:10
Attachments: [Wayland Bennett Tribute.pdf](#)
[ATT00001.htm](#)

Samuel J. Cox
RADM, USN (retired)
Director of Naval History
Curator for the Navy
Director, Naval History and Heritage Command

Dear Admiral Cox,

I am writing to you today to seek your support in preserving the remains of a United States Navy/Marine Corps aircraft which crashed in 1943, tragically taking the life of its young aviator and serving as his sacred tomb for the next 51 years. WWII Marine fighter pilot, 2Lt. Wayland Edward Bennett, USMCR, was missing but never forgotten.

- Aircraft: F4U-1 Corsair, US Navy BuNo 02608 (VMF-214 "Black Sheep")
- Aviator: 2Lt. Wayland Edward Bennett, USMCR
- Crash Date: 22OCT43
- Crash Site: Espiritu Santo island in the New Hebrides (now, the Republic of Vanuatu)
- Excavation & Recovery: Conducted by CIL-HI in 1994; aviator's remains were returned to US and burial ceremony conducted in aviator's hometown of Texarkana, Texas in 1994

BACKGROUND:

In 1988 and 1989, I had the great honor of serving as a member of two expeditionary teams in search of Lt. Bennett. These search teams were formed by members of his hometown of Texarkana, Texas & Arkansas. Our search was conducted in the Republic of Vanuatu with the full cooperation and at the direction of the aviator's family members and friends.

In 1994, six years and four expeditions later, the aircraft was ultimately uncovered by local loggers which notified our team leader, who then informed the US Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CIL-HI). CIL-HI dispatched a team to the islands to conduct an excavation of the site that same year and return Lt. Bennett's remains to Texarkana for a proper military burial.

After 51 years, Lt. Bennett was returning home to the United States. His return was ceremoniously marked by a parade down the main street in our hometown. A caisson carrying his flag draped coffin was flanked by U.S. Marines, veterans, and search team members and was carried to where he would be laid to rest beside generations of his family who had preceded him in death. Sadly, this included the aviator's twin sister, who had provided moral and financial support to the search team and lived just long enough to learn that her brother was found, yet she passed away before his

remains were repatriated. As a bugle sounded Taps in the distance, Lt. Bennett's former squadron, VMF-214, conducted a salute in the form of a burial flyover in missing man formation.

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After making contact with the museum's owner, I learned that the fuselage was only being used as reference for their project and afterward it would be sold to recover expenses. The museum owner assured me that no parts were being removed from the aircraft and even expressed interest in seeing it repatriated to the United States one day, where members of Lt. Bennett's family and community could frequently visit it. I immediately reached out to the Bennett family to keep them apprised. Unfortunately, it was instead sold to another Australian collector only to be stored inside a shipping container for the next several years.

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REQUEST:

Admiral Cox, I respectfully request your assistance in honoring this fallen warrior, his family and his community, by respecting the memory of Lt. Bennett by not allowing the commercial exploitation of the aircraft in which he lost his life. I, therefore, request your assistance in (1) maintaining the Navy's ownership of this aircraft and (2) seeking cooperation with the Australian government to help secure and return the aircraft to the United States for display in a museum thereby allowing "Susie-Q" to remain in her current state as a 'symbol of remembrance' for the sacrifice made by this family's loved one.

The President of the Board of the Texarkana Museums System in Lt. Bennett's hometown, Ms. Velvet Hall Cool, (copied) has expressed her Board's interest in receiving and curating the remains of this aircraft in which this community's favorite son had been interred for more than half a century, should it find its way back to the United States.

Very Sincerely,

Michael

Michael Wyrick

Team Leader, 1989 Wayland Bennett MIA Search Expedition
Team Member, 1988 Wayland Bennett MIA Search Expedition

Member, NESA World Explorer Program Subcommittee
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Museum Interested in Receiving and Curating Lt. Bennett's Corsair (02608):

- Texarkana Museums System: <http://www.texarkanamuseum.org>

(You may either click the links, or copy and paste URL into your own browser to securely view.)

From: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
To: [Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
Subject: FW: checking in on 02608
Date: Thursday, July 18, 2019 8:01:00

Looks like aircraft is still in Victoria

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick (b) (6) >
Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2019 10:29 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Fwd: checking in on 02608

Bob, see the response below ...

Begin forwarded message:

From: (b) (6) <(b) (6)>
Date: July 17, 2019 at 7:57:41 PM EDT
To: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Subject: Re: checking in on 02608

Hi Michael,
How are you mate? No, I still have not unpacked the aircraft. I have not been able to generate the money to set up a warehouse and get started. I have made the decision to sell the aircraft and I am currently in the middle of a deal to send the aircraft back to USA. If the deal goes through, I will inform you of where she is headed. At this stage the deal has not gone through, but it is promising. If it does go through then it looks like Susie-Q will end up back in the air! Which I think is very exciting.

I will keep you informed as to what is happening. I had already planned to contact you if the sale goes through.

Best regards,

(b) (6)

On Thu, Jul 18, 2019 at 4:27 AM Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)> wrote:

Hi (b) (6)

It's been awhile since we last chatted and I thought I would check in on you

and our Susie-Q!! How are you both doing?

Is she still in storage or have you been able to begin working on her?

All the best,

Michael

On Jul 3, 2017, at 11:11 PM, (b) (6)
(b) (6) > wrote:

Hi Michael,

Thanks for your email. I've been getting up to date with the history of 2nd Lt Bennett and the search for the aircraft. I'm about half way through reading the search for the lost blacksheep.

Currently the aircraft has gone into storage where it will remain for up to 12 months until I can secure a location to unpack it. Once it is unpacked, yourself and anyone connected to aircraft are welcome to come and see it.

Something quite interesting about 02608 is that it was wearing 2 different paint jobs on it's last day flying.

On the port side it is #19 and has the pre july 43 roundel with no bars

on the starboard side it is #88 and has the post august 43 star and bars.

I have attached some photos.

02608 will not donate any parts. It is my intent to get her back up on her feet and I already have parts from other aircraft to contribute towards that. Whether 02608 flies again is another issue, but is on the table.

My plan is to finish the aircraft as #88 in the 3 colour scheme you see in the photos and with the permission of the Bennett family, call her Susie-Q.

But I don't want to promise that yet, in-case I am not the one to finish the project. If for any reason it is sold or moves on, I lose the power to make that decision, so I don't want to mention it to the Bennett family, but as long as I own it, that is the plan. (I'm sure any new owner would want to honour the heritage anyway). I have no plans of selling, I'm just realistic that these things take time and time changes everything!

Best regards,

(b) (6)

Michael Wyrick MN'08
Member, Board of Directors
Past Vice Chair & Membership Director
Explorers Club Washington Group (ECWG)
Cell: (b) (6)
www.explorers.org

<ECSeal.161001.JPG-4 copy.jpg>

From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: Fwd: [Non-DoD Source] US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608
Date: Thursday, April 02, 2020 14:17:24

Dr. Neyland, please be advised of the below correspondence.

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Nauman, Joshua P CAPT USN CNO (USA)"
<(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)>
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608
Date: April 2, 2020 at 2:05:40 PM EDT
To: Michael Wyrick (b) (6) >
Cc: "boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org"
<boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org>

Mr. Wyrick:

I understand that you have also been in email correspondence with Mr. Sam Cox, Director, Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHHC). NHHHC, as stewards for aircraft like BuNo. 02608, is coordinating a decision on this issue with relevant Department of the Navy authorities.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact Mr. Kai V. Bernal-LeClaire, Assistant Counsel for NHHHC. He can be reached at (b) (6) [navy.mil](#) or (b) (6) (b) (6)

Regards,

CAPT Josh Nauman
JAGC USN
Special Counsel to the CNO
(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6) >
Sent: Thursday, April 2, 2020 10:47 AM
To: Nauman, Joshua P CAPT USN CNO (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)>
Cc: boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org
Subject: Re: [Non-DoD Source] US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608

Thank you Capt. Nauman,

I appreciate your very quick response, especially with all that is on your and CNO Gilday's plate right now. Please know the timing, as unfortunate as it is, was

driven by news I received from the Australian collector in Victoria that he is finalizing a sale of the aircraft to a collector in the US.

Best regards,

Michael

On Apr 2, 2020, at 10:04 AM, Nauman, Joshua P CAPT USN CNO (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)> wrote:

Mr. Wyrick,

Thank you for your email to the CNO. I am replying on his behalf.

I am reviewing your request and hope to have a response for you in the near future.

Regards,

CAPT Josh Nauman
JAGC USN
Special Counsel to the CNO
(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Date: Wednesday, Apr 01, 2020, 7:21 PM
To: Gilday, Michael M ADM USN CNO (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>
Cc: Board President Texarkana Museums
<boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608

Admiral Michael Gilday
Chief of Naval Operations
1200 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350-1200

Dear Admiral Gilday,

I am writing to you today to seek your support in preserving the remains of a United States Navy/Marine Corps aircraft which crashed in 1943, tragically taking the life of its young aviator and serving as his sacred tomb for the next 51 years. WWII Marine fighter pilot, 2Lt. Wayland Edward Bennett, USMCR, was missing but never forgotten.

- Aircraft: F4U-1 Corsair, US Navy BuNo 02608 (VMF-214 “Black Sheep”)
- Aviator: 2Lt. Wayland Edward Bennett, USMCR
- Crash Date: 22OCT43
- Crash Site: Espiritu Santo island in the New Hebrides (now, the Republic of Vanuatu)
- Excavation & Recovery: Conducted by CIL-HI in 1994; aviator’s remains were returned to US and burial ceremony conducted in aviator’s hometown of Texarkana, Texas in 1994

BACKGROUND:

In 1988 and 1989, I had the great honor of serving as a member of two expeditionary teams in search of Lt. Bennett. These search teams were formed by members of his hometown of Texarkana, Texas & Arkansas. Our search was conducted in the Republic of Vanuatu with the full cooperation and at the direction of the aviator’s family members and friends.

In 1994, six years and four expeditions later, the aircraft was ultimately uncovered by local loggers which notified our team leader, who then informed the US Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CIL-HI). CIL-HI dispatched a team to the islands to conduct an excavation of the site that same year and return Lt. Bennett’s remains to Texarkana for a proper military burial.

After 51 years, Lt. Bennett was returning home to the United States. His return was ceremoniously marked by a parade down the main street in our hometown. A caisson carrying his flag draped coffin was flanked by U.S. Marines, veterans, and search team members and was carried to where he would be laid to rest beside generations of his family who had preceded him in death. Sadly, this included the aviator’s twin sister, who had provided moral and financial support to the search team and lived just long enough to learn that her brother was found, yet she passed away before his remains were repatriated. As a bugle sounded Taps in the distance, Lt. Bennett’s former squadron, VMF-214, conducted a salute in the form of a burial flyover in missing man formation.

In 2015, on a return to Vanuatu as a disaster relief volunteer, I reconnected with local villagers whom had assisted our teams’ expeditions in the 80s and 90s. During the visit, a missionary informed me that an Australian private museum owner had recently negotiated a deal to purchase and excavate the fuselage of Lt. Bennett’s Corsair from the jungle. This Corsair, which Lt. Bennett affectionately named “Susie-Q” (after his mother) was crated, shipped and later displayed in this private museum while being used to aid in the construction of a replica Corsair

fighter.

After making contact with the museum's owner, I learned that the fuselage was only being used as reference for their project and afterward it would be sold to recover expenses. The museum owner assured me that no parts were being removed from the aircraft and even expressed interest in seeing it repatriated to the United States one day, where members of Lt. Bennett's family and community could frequently visit it. I immediately reached out to the Bennett family to keep them apprised. Unfortunately, it was instead sold to another Australian collector only to be stored inside a shipping container for the next several years.

This current collector in possession of "Susie-Q" claims to be negotiating a sale to a collector/restorer in the United States. My concern, and the concern of many of Lt. Bennett's family members with whom I have corresponded, is that 'restoration' or private collection could see this aircraft significantly altered to the point that it loses its integrity and no longer appears as Lt. Bennett's aircraft and memorializes his sacrifice. Also, with the possibility of it being flown, it could crash again further adding to the family's hardship. We instead feel that the appropriate place for this plane, since already disturbed from its resting place in Vanuatu, should therefore be in a proper museum.

REQUEST:

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The President of the Board of the Texarkana Museums System in Lt. Bennett's hometown, Ms. Velvet Hall Cool, (copied) has expressed her Board's interest in receiving and curating the remains of this aircraft in which this community's favorite son had been interred for more than half a century, should it find its way back to the United States.

Very Sincerely,

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Michael Wyrick

Team Leader, 1989 Wayland Bennett MIA Search Expedition
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Member, Board of Directors / Past Vice Chair / Past Membership
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www.explorers.org

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Museum Interested in Receiving and Curating Lt. Bennett's Corsair (02608):

- Texarkana Museums System: <http://www.texarkanamuseum.org>

(You may either click the links, or copy and paste URL into your own browser to securely view.)

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From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: Fwd: [Non-DoD Source] US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608
Date: Thursday, April 02, 2020 10:53:56

FYI

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Nauman, Joshua P CAPT USN CNO (USA)"
(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)>
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608
Date: April 2, 2020 at 10:04:11 AM EDT
To: **(b) (6)** " **(b) (6)** >
Cc: "boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org"
<boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org>

Mr. Wyrick,

Thank you for your email to the CNO. I am replying on his behalf.

I am reviewing your request and hope to have a response for you in the near future.

Regards,

CAPT Josh Nauman
JAGC USN
Special Counsel to the CNO
(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)

From: Michael Wyrick <**(b) (6)**>
Date: Wednesday, Apr 01, 2020, 7:21 PM
To: Gilday, Michael M ADM USN CNO (USA) <**(b) (6)** [navy.mil](#)>
Cc: Board President Texarkana Museums <boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608

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Chief of Naval Operations
1200 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350-1200

Dear Admiral Gilday,

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From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: Fwd: [Non-DoD Source] US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608
Date: Thursday, April 02, 2020 10:49:40

FYI

Begin forwarded message:

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Subject: Re: [Non-DoD Source] US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608
Date: April 2, 2020 at 10:47:16 AM EDT
To: "Nauman, Joshua P CAPT USN CNO (USA)"
(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)>
Cc: "boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org"
<boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org>

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In 2015, on a return to Vanuatu as a disaster relief volunteer, I reconnected with local villagers whom had assisted our teams' expeditions in the 80s and 90s. During the visit, a missionary informed me that an Australian private museum owner had recently negotiated a deal to purchase and excavate the fuselage of Lt. Bennett's Corsair from the jungle. This Corsair, which Lt. Bennett affectionately named "Susie-Q" (after his mother) was crated, shipped and later displayed in this private museum while being used to aid in the construction of a replica Corsair fighter.

After making contact with the museum's owner, I learned that the fuselage was only being used as reference for their project and afterward it would be sold to recover expenses. The museum owner assured me that no parts were being removed from the aircraft and even expressed interest in seeing it repatriated to the United States one day, where members of Lt. Bennett's family and community could frequently visit it. I immediately reached out to the Bennett family to keep them apprised. Unfortunately, it was instead sold to another Australian collector only to be stored inside a shipping container for the next several years.

This current collector in possession of "Susie-Q" claims to be negotiating a sale to a collector/restorer in the United States. My concern, and the concern of many of Lt. Bennett's family members with whom I have corresponded, is that 'restoration' or private collection could see this aircraft significantly altered to the point that it loses its integrity and no longer appears as Lt. Bennett's aircraft and memorializes his sacrifice. Also, with the possibility of it being flown, it could crash again further adding to the family's hardship. We instead feel that the appropriate place for this plane, since already disturbed from its resting place in Vanuatu, should therefore be in a proper museum.

REQUEST:

Admiral Gilday, I respectfully request your assistance in honoring this fallen warrior, his family and his community, by respecting the memory of

Lt. Bennett by not allowing the commercial exploitation of the aircraft in which he lost his life. I, therefore, request your assistance in (1) maintaining the Navy's ownership of this aircraft and (2) seeking cooperation with the Australian government to help secure and return the aircraft to the United States for display in a museum thereby allowing "Susie-Q" to remain in her current state as a 'symbol of remembrance' for the sacrifice made by this family's loved one.

The President of the Board of the Texarkana Museums System in Lt. Bennett's hometown, Ms. Velvet Hall Cool, (copied) has expressed her Board's interest in receiving and curating the remains of this aircraft in which this community's favorite son had been interred for more than half a century, should it find its way back to the United States.

Very Sincerely,

Michael

Michael Wyrick

Team Leader, 1989 Wayland Bennett MIA Search Expedition
Team Member, 1988 Wayland Bennett MIA Search Expedition

Member, NESA World Explorer Program Subcommittee
National Eagle Scout Association

Member, Board of Directors / Past Vice Chair / Past Membership
Director
Explorers Club Washington Group
The Explorers Club (Founded 1904)
Cell: (b) (6)
www.explorers.org

Congressional Tributes:

- US Rep. Steve Largent's Floor Speech Tribute to 2Lt. Wayland Bennett: <https://www.congress.gov/104/crec/1995/05/24/CREC-1995-05-24-pt1-PgE1107.pdf>
- US Senator Dale Bumpers's Floor Speech Tribute to 2Lt. Wayland Bennett: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1994-pt21/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1994-pt21-6-1.pdf>

Museum Interested in Receiving and Curating Lt. Bennett's Corsair (02608):

- Texarkana Museums System: <http://www.texarkanamuseum.org>

(You may either click the links, or copy and paste URL into your own browser to securely view.)

Michael Wyrick MN'08
Member, Board of Directors
Past Vice Chair & Membership Director
Explorers Club Washington Group (ECWG)
Cell: (b) (6)
www.explorers.org



Michael Wyrick MN'08
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From: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
To: ["Michael Wyrick"](#)
Cc: [Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#); [Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
Subject: LT Bennett's aircraft
Date: Thursday, March 05, 2020 9:50:00

Michael

We have not spoken in a while. If you have time to talk, I would like to update you on what is occurring with BUNO 02608. A Congressman would like Navy to abandon this aircraft so a warbird restorer could purchase and restore it to a flying aircraft. We would be interested to know how the family would react to this, if there were interest in the aircraft being in a museum instead, or would prefer some other disposition.

v/r

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
To: [Michael Wyrick](#)
Cc: [Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] Re: checking in on 02608
Date: Thursday, July 18, 2019 13:10:35
Attachments: [GA logo_sm.bmp](#)

Thanks Michael. Let's stay in touch.
Bob

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Date: Thursday, Jul 18, 2019, 12:59 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>
Cc: Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) (b) (6)@navy.mil
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: checking in on 02608

Bob,

I just received a call from the Board President of the Texarkana Museums System and she said that would 100% be interested in receiving and properly displaying 02608, should it be possible to repatriate stateside.

Please let me know once your team determines how it will proceed and I will keep you posted on any developments from my side.

Best regards,

Michael

On Jul 18, 2019, at 12:38 PM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) (b) (6)@navy.mil wrote:

Michael

Thanks again for your help. It was very timely.

All the Best

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command

805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Sent: Thursday, July 18, 2019 12:30 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
<(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>
Cc: Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA)
<(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: checking in on 02608

Happy to be involved, Bob. Thank you again for alerting me to the web posting.

I'm sure that we could place it with either the Texarkana Museums System or the D.A. Carson US Marine Corp Reserve Training Center in Texarkana. D.A. Carson was a high school buddy of Bennett's and he was instrumental in organizing our searches in the 80s. I've written to the new museum board president (a former classmate of mine) to pitch the idea to her and propose the museum building or the Texarkana Airport as a venue.

I'll let you know what I hear back.

Best,

Michael

On Jul 18, 2019, at 8:06 AM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) (b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)> wrote:

Thank you Michael for researching this. It is a huge help to us to know where the aircraft is located. I am not sure what our course of action will be but knowing where the aircraft is located and who the owner is helps.

Did we ever determine if a Museum might be interested in it?

Best

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command

805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2019 10:29 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
<(b) (6)@navy.mil>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Fwd: checking in on 02608

Bob, see the response below ...

Begin forwarded message:

From: (b) (6) <(b) (6)>
Date: July 17, 2019 at 7:57:41 PM EDT
To: Michael Wyrick (b) (6)>
Subject: Re: checking in on 02608

Hi Michael,
How are you mate? No, I still have not unpacked the aircraft. I have not been able to generate the money to set up a warehouse and get started. I have made the decision to sell the aircraft and I am currently in the middle of a deal to send the aircraft back to USA. If the deal goes through, I will inform you of where she is headed. At this stage the deal has not gone through, but it is promising. If it does go through then it looks like Susie-Q will end up back in the air! Which I think is very exciting.
I will keep you informed as to what is happening. I had already planned to contact you if the sale goes through.
Best regards,
(b) (6)

On Thu, Jul 18, 2019 at 4:27 AM Michael Wyrick
<(b) (6)> wrote:

Hi (b) (6)

It's been awhile since we last chatted and I thought I would check in on you and our Susie-Q!! How are you both doing?

Is she still in storage or have you been able to begin working on her?

All the best,

Michael

On Jul 3, 2017, at 11:11 PM, (b) (6)
(b) (6) <(b) (6)>
wrote:

Hi Michael,

Thanks for your email. I've been getting up to date with the history of 2nd Lt Bennett and the search for the aircraft. I'm about half way through reading the search for the lost blacksheep.

Currently the aircraft has gone into storage where it will remain for up to 12 months until I can secure a location to unpack it. Once it is unpacked, yourself and anyone connected to aircraft are welcome to come and see it.

Something quite interesting about 02608 is that it was wearing 2 different paint jobs on it's last day flying.

On the port side it is #19 and has the pre july 43 roundel with no bars

on the starboard side it is #88 and has the post august 43 star and bars.

I have attached some photos.

02608 will not donate any parts. It is my intent to get her back up on her feet and I already have parts from other aircraft to contribute towards that. Whether 02608 flies again is another issue, but is on the table.

My plan is to finish the aircraft as #88 in the 3 colour scheme you see in the photos and with the permission of the Bennett family, call her Susie-Q.

But I don't want to promise that yet, in-case I am not the one to finish the project. If for any reason it is sold or moves on, I lose the power to make that decision, so I don't want to mention it to the Bennett

family, but as long as I own it, that is the plan. (I'm sure any new owner would want to honour the heritage anyway). I have no plans of selling, I'm just realistic that these things take time and time changes everything!

Best regards,

(b) (6)

Michael Wyrick MN'08
Member, Board of Directors
Past Vice Chair & Membership Director
Explorers Club Washington Group (ECWG)
Cell: (b) (6)
www.explorers.org

<ECSeal.161001.JPG-4 copy.jpg>

Michael Wyrick, Principal
Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)

<image001.png>

Michael Wyrick, Principal
Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)



From: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
To: ["Michael Wyrick"](#)
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft
Date: Friday, December 13, 2019 11:56:00
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Merry Christmas to you as well!

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick (b) (6) >
Sent: Friday, December 13, 2019 11:39 AM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>
Subject: Re: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft

Received. Thanks Bob, will be in touch.

I wish you and your family a Merry Christmas,

Michael

On Dec 13, 2019, at 10:58 AM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil> wrote:

Good Morning Michael

If you are interested in an update on the Bennett aircraft, please give me a call when convenient.

Best Regards

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060

Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
Sent: Thursday, August 22, 2019 9:55 AM
To: 'Michael Wyrick' <(b) (6)>
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft

Michael

We can talk today or tomorrow if you like. I am working from home today as there is a big ceremony at Navy Yard today. You can call me on my work cell (below) or my personal one.

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 3:54 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
<(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>
Subject: Re: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft

Would love to talk whenever is convenient — I assume tomorrow would be better?

On Aug 21, 2019, at 7:53 AM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)> wrote:

Michael

They pulled it because our lawyer called and made inquiries. Not sure where this is going but will see. If you want to talk just let me know.

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
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Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breesse St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick (b) (6) >
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 5:15 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
<(b) (6) navy.mil>
Subject: Re: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft

Thanks Bob, look forward to it.

On Aug 20, 2019, at 5:11 PM, Neyland, Robert S CIV
USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
<(b) (6) navy.mil> wrote:

Hi Michael
I can fill you in a bit when back in office.

Bob

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)
(b) (6) <mailto:(b) (6)>>
Date: Tuesday, Aug 20, 2019, 5:03 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
(b) (6) navy.mil <mailto:(b) (6) navy.mil>>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft

Bob,

Out of curiosity, I checked this link again and found it has now been removed. I also checked the site's "sales log" for 2019 and it does NOT list 02608 as being sold.

Will check in with the owner in Victoria and see if there has been any movement. Will revert back.

All my best,

Michael

On Jul 17, 2019, at 3:12 PM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN
NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)

<(b) (6) [REDACTED]@navy.mil<mailto:(b) (6) [REDACTED]@navy.mil>> wrote:

Michael

Thank you for the quick reply. Yes, we believe it is the same aircraft and it apparently is up for sale by an American firm in Illinois. We are trying to determine if it is physically in the U.S. or still in Victoria and if this firm is the owner or the broker. Below is the link we have:

<http://courtesyaircraft.com/aircraft/vought-sikorski-f4u-1-birdcage-corsair-project-package/>

I would appreciate your thoughts.

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6) [REDACTED]
Cell: (b) (6) [REDACTED]

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6) [REDACTED]@navy.mil>
<(b) (6) [REDACTED]@navy.mil>
Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2019 2:20 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
<(b) (6) [REDACTED]@navy.mil<mailto:(b) (6) [REDACTED]@navy.mil>>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft

Hi Bob,

Great to hear from you, my friend.

I assume you're referring to Bu 02608 Corsair F4U-1 (2LT Wayland Bennett's plane)?

If so, I haven't heard if there has been any change, but will send a message to the guy who had purchased it from the museum in Adelaide. Last reported (May 2018) it was still in his storage container in Victoria.

Let me know your thoughts on this or if you're referring to another a/c that Agustin had inquired about.

All the best,

Michael

On Jul 17, 2019, at 1:18 PM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN

NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)

<(b) (6) navy.mil<mailto:(b) (6) navy.mil>> wrote:

Dear Michael

It has been awhile since we talked. I am emailing you to see if you have any new information regarding the aircraft that was recovered from Vanuatu and sold to an individual in Australia and now is for sale in the U.S. We are trying to look into this and determine a course of action.

Any insights you might have would be useful.

All the Best

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

Michael Wyrick, Principal
Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)

<image001.png>

Michael Wyrick, Principal
Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)

[cid:3adebbae-ca37-4938-9278-343e828211a3@namprd07.prod.outlook.com]

<GA logo_sm.bmp>

Michael Wyrick, Principal
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<image001.png>

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<image001.png>

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(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)



From: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
To: ["Michael Wyrick"](#)
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft
Date: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 7:53:00
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

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Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 5:15 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) (b) (6) navy.mil>
Subject: Re: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft

Thanks Bob, look forward to it.

On Aug 20, 2019, at 5:11 PM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) (b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)> wrote:

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I can fill you in a bit when back in office.

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Sent with BlackBerry Work
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Date: Tuesday, Aug 20, 2019, 5:03 PM
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Will check in with the owner in Victoria and see if there has been any movement. Will revert back.

All my best,

Michael

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I would appreciate your thoughts.

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Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6) <mailto:(b) (6) (b) (6)>>

Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2019 2:20 PM

To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)

<(b) (6) navy.mil<mailto:(b) (6) navy.mil>>

Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft

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All the best,

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<image001.png>

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[cid:3adebbae-ca37-4938-9278-343e828211a3@namprd07.prod.outlook.com]

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Michael Wyrick, Principal
Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)



From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: Re: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft
Date: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 17:15:45
Attachments: [GA logo_sm.bmp](#)

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Michael

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All the Best

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.

Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

Michael Wyrick, Principal
Global Associates, LLC
(b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

<image001.png>

Michael Wyrick, Principal
Global Associates, LLC
(b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

[\[cid:3adebbae-ca37-4938-9278-343e828211a3@namprd07.prod.outlook.com\]](mailto:[cid:3adebbae-ca37-4938-9278-343e828211a3@namprd07.prod.outlook.com])

<GA logo_sm.bmp>

Michael Wyrick, Principal
Global Associates, LLC
(b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)



From: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
To: [Michael Wyrick](#)
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft
Date: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 17:11:55
Attachments: [GA logo_sm.bmp](#)

Hi Michael

I can fill you in a bit when back in office.

Bob

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Date: Tuesday, Aug 20, 2019, 5:03 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft

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Will check in with the owner in Victoria and see if there has been any movement. Will revert back.

All my best,

Michael

On Jul 17, 2019, at 3:12 PM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](#)> wrote:

Michael

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<http://courtesyaircraft.com/aircraft/vought-sikorski-f4u-1-birdcage-corsair-project-package/>

I would appreciate your thoughts.

Bob

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805 Kidder Breeze St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2019 2:20 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
<(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft

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I assume you're referring to Bu 02608 Corsair F4U-1 (2LT Wayland Bennett's plane)?

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All the best,

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Any insights you might have would be useful.

All the Best

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805 Kidder Breese St, SE
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Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6) 974

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Global Associates, LLC
(b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

<image001.png>

Michael Wyrick, Principal
Global Associates, LLC
(b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)



From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: Re: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft
Date: Friday, December 13, 2019 11:39:37
Attachments: [GA logo_sm.bmp](#)

Received. Thanks Bob, will be in touch.

I wish you and your family a Merry Christmas,

Michael

On Dec 13, 2019, at 10:58 AM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)> wrote:

Good Morning Michael

If you are interested in an update on the Bennett aircraft, please give me a call when convenient.

Best Regards

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
Sent: Thursday, August 22, 2019 9:55 AM
To: 'Michael Wyrick' (b) (6) >
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft

Michael

We can talk today or tomorrow if you like. I am working from home today as there is a big ceremony at Navy Yard today. You can call me on my work cell (below) or my personal one.

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head

Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 3:54 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
(b) (6) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>
Subject: Re: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft

Would love to talk whenever is convenient — I assume tomorrow would be better?

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They pulled it because our lawyer called and made inquiries. Not sure where this is going but will see. If you want to talk just let me know.

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Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 5:15 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
(b) (6) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>
Subject: Re: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft

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From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
(b) (6) <mailto:(b) (6)>

Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2019 2:20 PM

To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)

(b) (6) <mailto:(b) (6)> <mailto:(b) (6)>

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[[cid:3adebbae-ca37-4938-9278-343e828211a3@namprd07.prod.outlook.com](mailto:3adebbae-ca37-4938-9278-343e828211a3@namprd07.prod.outlook.com)]

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<image001.png>

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Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)



From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Cox, Samuel J SES USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(US\)](#)
Cc: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#); [Velvet Hall Cool](#); [Lundstrom, Thomas J CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
Subject: Re: [Non-DoD Source] US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608
Date: Thursday, April 09, 2020 15:16:10

Admiral Cox,

I just wanted to let you know that since we last communicated, eighteen members of 2LT Bennett's family have sent emails to their members of Congress and asked them to send a pre-drafted letter to the Acting Secretary of the Navy. Many of them have received positive responses from the chiefs of staff and/or legislative directors whom claim to have made inquiries to the Navy regarding 02608.

These congressional members include:

1. Rep. Randy Weber
2. Rep. Lloyd Doggett
3. Rep. Kevin Hern
4. Rep. Chellie Pingree
5. Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester
6. Rep. Marcia Fudge
7. Speaker Nancy Pelosi
8. Rep. Jenniffer González-Colón
9. Rep. John Ratcliffe
10. Rep. Don Beyer
11. Rep. Jack Bergman (Retired Lt. General, USMC)
12. Sen. Todd Young (former USMC intel officer)

I just didn't want any of your staff to be blindsided should any inquiries make their way to your command.

Respectfully,

Michael

On Apr 2, 2020, at 11:18 AM, Cox, Samuel J SES USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (US) <[\(b\) \(6\)](#) [navy.mil](#)> wrote:

Dear Mr. Wyrick, Thank you very much for your note. It remains the position of the US Navy that the aircraft remains the property of the US Navy department despite its present circumstances. We are under some significant pressure from one Congressman to "divest" the aircraft so it can be restored to flying condition. This would have to be a decision by the Secretary of the Navy. There are some positives to doing so but also many negative consequences and bad precedents, some of which you clearly articulate in your note. Your note is timely and much appreciated and will be used in the decision brief that will go to the Secretary of the Navy. Right now that is being coordinated among a number of Navy, Marine,

DOD and other federal agencies that have a stake in this very complex issue. I am not permitted to lobby Congress one way or another, however I might suggest that gaining some Congressional support might be useful to your position. It is my primary desire that the sacrifice of 2LT Bennett be appropriately respected and remembered.

Sincerely,
Sam

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: Michael Wyrick
<(b) (6) <[<mailto:\(b\) \(6\)>](mailto:(b) (6))>>
Date: Wednesday, Apr 01, 2020, 7:21 PM
To: Cox, Samuel J SES USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (US)
<(b) (6) <[navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)<[mailto:\(b\) \(6\)@navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>>>
Cc: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
(b) (6) <[navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)<[mailto:\(b\) \(6\)@navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>>, Board President
Texarkana Museums
<boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org<<mailto:boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org>>>>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608

Samuel J. Cox
RADM, USN (retired)
Director of Naval History
Curator for the Navy
Director, Naval History and Heritage Command

Dear Admiral Cox,

I am writing to you today to seek your support in preserving the remains of a United States Navy/Marine Corps aircraft which crashed in 1943, tragically taking the life of its young aviator and serving as his sacred tomb for the next 51 years. WWII Marine fighter pilot, 2Lt. Wayland Edward Bennett, USMCR, was missing but never forgotten.

- * Aircraft: F4U-1 Corsair, US Navy BuNo 02608 (VMF-214 "Black Sheep")
- * Aviator: 2Lt. Wayland Edward Bennett, USMCR
- * Crash Date: 22OCT43
- * Crash Site: Espiritu Santo island in the New Hebrides (now, the Republic of Vanuatu)
- * Excavation & Recovery: Conducted by CIL-HI in 1994; aviator's remains were returned to US and burial ceremony conducted in aviator's hometown of Texarkana, Texas in 1994

BACKGROUND:

In 1988 and 1989, I had the great honor of serving as a member of two expeditionary teams in search of Lt. Bennett. These search teams were formed by members of his hometown of Texarkana, Texas & Arkansas. Our search was conducted in the Republic of Vanuatu with the full cooperation and at the direction of the aviator's family members and friends.

In 1994, six years and four expeditions later, the aircraft was ultimately uncovered by local loggers which notified our team leader, who then informed the US Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CIL-HI). CIL-HI dispatched a team to the islands to conduct an excavation of the site that same year and return Lt. Bennett's remains to Texarkana for a proper military burial.

After 51 years, Lt. Bennett was returning home to the United States. His return was ceremoniously marked by a parade down the main street in our hometown. A caisson carrying his flag draped coffin was flanked by U.S. Marines, veterans, and search team members and was carried to where he would be laid to rest beside generations of his family who had preceded him in death. Sadly, this included the aviator's twin sister, who had provided moral and financial support to the search team and lived just long enough to learn that her brother was found, yet she passed away before his remains were repatriated. As a bugle sounded Taps in the distance, Lt. Bennett's former squadron, VMF-214, conducted a salute in the form of a burial flyover in missing man formation.

In 2015, on a return to Vanuatu as a disaster relief volunteer, I reconnected with local villagers whom had assisted our teams' expeditions in the 80s and 90s. During the visit, a missionary informed me that an Australian private museum owner had recently negotiated a deal to purchase and excavate the fuselage of Lt. Bennett's Corsair from the jungle. This Corsair, which Lt. Bennett affectionately named "Susie-Q" (after his mother) was crated, shipped and later displayed in this private museum while being used to aid in the construction of a replica Corsair fighter.

After making contact with the museum's owner, I learned that the fuselage was only being used as reference for their project and afterward it would be sold to recover expenses. The museum owner assured me that no parts were being removed from the aircraft and even expressed interest in seeing it repatriated to the United States one day, where members of Lt. Bennett's family and community could frequently visit it. I immediately reached out to the Bennett family to keep them apprised. Unfortunately, it was instead sold to another Australian collector only to be stored inside a shipping container for the next several years.

This current collector in possession of "Susie-Q" claims to be negotiating a sale to a collector/restorer in the United States. My concern, and the concern of many of Lt. Bennett's family members with whom I have corresponded, is that 'restoration' or private collection could see this aircraft significantly altered to the point that it loses its integrity and no longer appears as Lt. Bennett's aircraft and memorializes his sacrifice. Also, with the possibility of it being flown, it could crash again further adding to the family's hardship. We instead feel that the

appropriate place for this plane, since already disturbed from its resting place in Vanuatu, should therefore be in a proper museum.

REQUEST:

Admiral Cox, I respectfully request your assistance in honoring this fallen warrior, his family and his community, by respecting the memory of Lt. Bennett by not allowing the commercial exploitation of the aircraft in which he lost his life. I, therefore, request your assistance in (1) maintaining the Navy's ownership of this aircraft and (2) seeking cooperation with the Australian government to help secure and return the aircraft to the United States for display in a museum thereby allowing "Susie-Q" to remain in her current state as a 'symbol of remembrance' for the sacrifice made by this family's loved one.

The President of the Board of the Texarkana Museums System in Lt. Bennett's hometown, Ms. Velvet Hall Cool, (copied) has expressed her Board's interest in receiving and curating the remains of this aircraft in which this community's favorite son had been interred for more than half a century, should it find its way back to the United States.

Very Sincerely,

Michael

Michael Wyrick

Team Leader, 1989 Wayland Bennett MIA Search Expedition
Team Member, 1988 Wayland Bennett MIA Search Expedition

Member, NESA World Explorer Program Subcommittee
National Eagle Scout Association

Member, Board of Directors / Past Vice Chair / Past Membership Director
Explorers Club Washington Group
The Explorers Club (Founded 1904)
Cell: (b) (6)

www.explorers.org<<http://www.explorers.noclick.org>>

Congressional Tributes:

* US Rep. Steve Largent's Floor Speech Tribute to 2Lt. Wayland Bennett:
<https://www.congress.gov/104/crec/1995/05/24/CREC-1995-05-24-pt1-PgE1107.pdf><<https://www.congress.noclick.gov/104/crec/1995/05/24/CREC-1995-05-24-pt1-PgE1107.pdf>>

* US Senator Dale Bumpers's Floor Speech Tribute to 2Lt. Wayland Bennett:
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1994-pt21/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1994-pt21-6-1.pdf><<https://www.govinfo.noclick.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1994-pt21/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1994-pt21-6-1.pdf>>

Museum Interested in Receiving and Curating Lt. Bennett's Corsair (02608):

* Texarkana Museums System:

<http://www.texarkanamuseum.org><<http://www.texarkanamuseum.noclick.org>>

(You may either click the links, or copy and paste URL into your own browser to securely view.)

Michael Wyrick MN'08

Member, Board of Directors

Past Vice Chair & Membership Director

Explorers Club Washington Group (ECWG)

Cell: (b) (6)

www.explorers.org



From: [Michael Wyrick](#)
To: [Cox, Samuel J SES USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(US\)](#)
Cc: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#); [Board President Texarkana Museums](#); [Lundstrom, Thomas J CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
Subject: Re: [Non-DoD Source] US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608
Date: Thursday, April 02, 2020 11:56:27

Admiral Cox,

Thank you very much for your kind and informative response. I appreciate your candor regarding the challenges faced by the NHHC and others within the Navy Command, as it pertains to this and other aircraft.

As a fellow appreciator of history, I can truly see both the positives and negatives in restoring these beautiful aircraft. However, it's clear that we share the belief that this issue is more complex when an American combatant has perished within the aircraft.

Your suggestion is well received and I can tell you as a former congressional staffer, a robust effort toward that end is well underway. Nearly 30 members of 2LT Bennett's family have been tracking the status of this aircraft since it was removed from the Vanuatu bush in 2015 and are all currently involved in making their voices heard.

Thank you for what you and your team do everyday to preserve this history of this great nation's Navy and Marine Corps. I wish you luck in your continuing mission.

Very sincerely,

Michael

On Apr 2, 2020, at 11:18 AM, Cox, Samuel J SES USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (US) [\(b\) \(6\)](#) [navy.mil](#)> wrote:

Dear Mr. Wyrick, Thank you very much for your note. It remains the position of the US Navy that the aircraft remains the property of the US Navy department despite its present circumstances. We are under some significant pressure from one Congressman to "divest" the aircraft so it can be restored to flying condition. This would have to be a decision by the Secretary of the Navy. There are some positives to doing so but also many negative consequences and bad precedents, some of which you clearly articulate in your note. Your note is timely and much appreciated and will be used in the decision brief that will go to the Secretary of the Navy. Right now that is being coordinated among a number of Navy, Marine, DOD and other federal agencies that have a stake in this very complex issue. I am not permitted to lobby Congress one way or another, however I might suggest that gaining some Congressional support might be useful to your position. It is my primary desire that the sacrifice of 2LT Bennett be appropriately respected and remembered.

Sincerely,
Sam

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: Michael Wyrick

<(b) (6) <[<mailto:\(b\) \(6\)>](mailto:(b) (6))>>

Date: Wednesday, Apr 01, 2020, 7:21 PM

To: Cox, Samuel J SES USN NHHW WASHINGTON DC (US)

<(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)<[<mailto:\(b\) \(6\)@navy.mil>](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>>

Cc: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)

<(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)<[<mailto:\(b\) \(6\)@navy.mil>](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>>, Board President
Texarkana Museums

<boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org<[<mailto:boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org>](mailto:boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org)>>

Subject: [Non-DoD Source] US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608

Samuel J. Cox
RADM, USN (retired)
Director of Naval History
Curator for the Navy
Director, Naval History and Heritage Command

Dear Admiral Cox,

I am writing to you today to seek your support in preserving the remains of a United States Navy/Marine Corps aircraft which crashed in 1943, tragically taking the life of its young aviator and serving as his sacred tomb for the next 51 years. WWII Marine fighter pilot, 2Lt. Wayland Edward Bennett, USMCR, was missing but never forgotten.

- * Aircraft: F4U-1 Corsair, US Navy BuNo 02608 (VMF-214 "Black Sheep")
- * Aviator: 2Lt. Wayland Edward Bennett, USMCR
- * Crash Date: 22OCT43
- * Crash Site: Espiritu Santo island in the New Hebrides (now, the Republic of Vanuatu)
- * Excavation & Recovery: Conducted by CIL-HI in 1994; aviator's remains were returned to US and burial ceremony conducted in aviator's hometown of Texarkana, Texas in 1994

BACKGROUND:

In 1988 and 1989, I had the great honor of serving as a member of two expeditionary teams in search of Lt. Bennett. These search teams were formed by members of his hometown of Texarkana, Texas & Arkansas. Our search was conducted in the Republic of Vanuatu with the full cooperation and at the direction of the aviator's family members and friends.

In 1994, six years and four expeditions later, the aircraft was ultimately uncovered

by local loggers which notified our team leader, who then informed the US Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CIL-HI). CIL-HI dispatched a team to the islands to conduct an excavation of the site that same year and return Lt. Bennett's remains to Texarkana for a proper military burial.

After 51 years, Lt. Bennett was returning home to the United States. His return was ceremoniously marked by a parade down the main street in our hometown. A caisson carrying his flag draped coffin was flanked by U.S. Marines, veterans, and search team members and was carried to where he would be laid to rest beside generations of his family who had preceded him in death. Sadly, this included the aviator's twin sister, who had provided moral and financial support to the search team and lived just long enough to learn that her brother was found, yet she passed away before his remains were repatriated. As a bugle sounded Taps in the distance, Lt. Bennett's former squadron, VMF-214, conducted a salute in the form of a burial flyover in missing man formation.

In 2015, on a return to Vanuatu as a disaster relief volunteer, I reconnected with local villagers whom had assisted our teams' expeditions in the 80s and 90s. During the visit, a missionary informed me that an Australian private museum owner had recently negotiated a deal to purchase and excavate the fuselage of Lt. Bennett's Corsair from the jungle. This Corsair, which Lt. Bennett affectionately named "Susie-Q" (after his mother) was crated, shipped and later displayed in this private museum while being used to aid in the construction of a replica Corsair fighter.

After making contact with the museum's owner, I learned that the fuselage was only being used as reference for their project and afterward it would be sold to recover expenses. The museum owner assured me that no parts were being removed from the aircraft and even expressed interest in seeing it repatriated to the United States one day, where members of Lt. Bennett's family and community could frequently visit it. I immediately reached out to the Bennett family to keep them apprised. Unfortunately, it was instead sold to another Australian collector only to be stored inside a shipping container for the next several years.

This current collector in possession of "Susie-Q" claims to be negotiating a sale to a collector/restorer in the United States. My concern, and the concern of many of Lt. Bennett's family members with whom I have corresponded, is that 'restoration' or private collection could see this aircraft significantly altered to the point that it loses its integrity and no longer appears as 2Lt. Bennett's aircraft and memorializes his sacrifice. Also, with the possibility of it being flown, it could crash again further adding to the family's hardship. We instead feel that the appropriate place for this plane, since already disturbed from its resting place in Vanuatu, should therefore be in a proper museum.

REQUEST:

Admiral Cox, I respectfully request your assistance in honoring this fallen warrior, his family and his community, by respecting the memory of Lt. Bennett by not allowing the commercial exploitation of the aircraft in which he lost his life. I, therefore, request your assistance in (1) maintaining the Navy's ownership

of this aircraft and (2) seeking cooperation with the Australian government to help secure and return the aircraft to the United States for display in a museum thereby allowing "Susie-Q" to remain in her current state as a 'symbol of remembrance' for the sacrifice made by this family's loved one.

The President of the Board of the Texarkana Museums System in Lt. Bennett's hometown, Ms. Velvet Hall Cool, (copied) has expressed her Board's interest in receiving and curating the remains of this aircraft in which this community's favorite son had been interred for more than half a century, should it find its way back to the United States.

Very Sincerely,

Michael

Michael Wyrick

Team Leader, 1989 Wayland Bennett MIA Search Expedition
Team Member, 1988 Wayland Bennett MIA Search Expedition

Member, NESA World Explorer Program Subcommittee
National Eagle Scout Association

Member, Board of Directors / Past Vice Chair / Past Membership Director
Explorers Club Washington Group
The Explorers Club (Founded 1904)
Cell: (b) (6)

www.explorers.org<<http://www.explorers.noclick.org>>

Congressional Tributes:

* US Rep. Steve Largent's Floor Speech Tribute to 2Lt. Wayland Bennett:
<https://www.congress.gov/104/crec/1995/05/24/CREC-1995-05-24-pt1-PgE1107.pdf><<https://www.congress.noclick.gov/104/crec/1995/05/24/CREC-1995-05-24-pt1-PgE1107.pdf>>

* US Senator Dale Bumper's Floor Speech Tribute to 2Lt. Wayland Bennett:
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1994-pt21/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1994-pt21-6-1.pdf><<https://www.govinfo.noclick.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1994-pt21/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1994-pt21-6-1.pdf>>

Museum Interested in Receiving and Curating Lt. Bennett's Corsair (02608):

* Texarkana Museums System:
<http://www.texarkanamuseum.org><<http://www.texarkanamuseum.noclick.org>>

(You may either click the links, or copy and paste URL into your own browser to securely view.)

Michael Wyrick MN'08
Member, Board of Directors
Past Vice Chair & Membership Director
Explorers Club Washington Group (ECWG)
Cell: (b) (6)
www.explorers.org



From: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
To: ["Michael Wyrick"](#)
Cc: [Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
Subject: RE: checking in on 02608
Date: Thursday, July 18, 2019 12:38:00
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Michael

Thanks again for your help. It was very timely.

All the Best

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Sent: Thursday, July 18, 2019 12:30 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>
Cc: Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: checking in on 02608

Happy to be involved, Bob. Thank you again for alerting me to the web posting.

I'm sure that we could place it with either the Texarkana Museums System or the D.A. Carson US Marine Corp Reserve Training Center in Texarkana. D.A. Carson was a high school buddy of Bennett's and he was instrumental in organizing our searches in the 80s. I've written to the new museum board president (a former classmate of mine) to pitch the idea to her and propose the museum building or the Texarkana Airport as a venue.

I'll let you know what I hear back.

Best,

Michael

On Jul 18, 2019, at 8:06 AM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil> wrote:

Thank you Michael for researching this. It is a huge help to us to know where the aircraft is located. I am not sure what our course of action will be but knowing where the aircraft is located and who the owner is helps.

Did we ever determine if a Museum might be interested in it?

Best

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2019 10:29 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
<(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Fwd: checking in on 02608

Bob, see the response below ...

Begin forwarded message:

From: (b) (6) <(b) (6)>
Date: July 17, 2019 at 7:57:41 PM EDT
To: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Subject: Re: checking in on 02608

Hi Michael,

How are you mate? No, I still have not unpacked the aircraft. I have not been able to generate the money to set up a warehouse and get started. I have made the decision to sell the aircraft and I am currently in the middle of a deal to send the aircraft back to USA. If the deal goes through, I will inform you of where she is headed. At this stage the deal has not gone through, but it is promising. If it does go through then it looks like Susie-Q will end up back in the air! Which I think is very exciting.

I will keep you informed as to what is happening. I had already planned to contact you if the sale goes through.

Best regards,

(b) (6)

On Thu, Jul 18, 2019 at 4:27 AM Michael Wyrick

<(b) (6)> wrote:

Hi (b) (6)

It's been awhile since we last chatted and I thought I would check in on you and our Susie-Q!! How are you both doing?

Is she still in storage or have you been able to begin working on her?

All the best,

Michael

On Jul 3, 2017, at 11:11 PM, (b) (6)

<(b) (6)> wrote:

Hi Michael,

Thanks for your email. I've been getting up to date with the history of 2nd Lt Bennett and the search for the aircraft. I'm about half way through reading the search for the lost blacksheep.

Currently the aircraft has gone into storage where it will remain for up to 12 months until I can secure a location to unpack it. Once it is unpacked, yourself and anyone connected to aircraft are welcome to come and see it.

Something quite interesting about 02608 is that it was wearing 2 different paint jobs on it's last day flying.

On the port side it is #19 and has the pre july 43 roundel with no bars

on the starboard side it is #88 and has the post august 43 star and bars.

I have attached some photos.

02608 will not donate any parts. It is my intent to get her back up on her feet and I already have parts from other aircraft to contribute towards that. Whether 02608 flies again is another issue, but is on the table.

My plan is to finish the aircraft as #88 in the 3 colour

scheme you see in the photos and with the permission of the Bennett family, call her Susie-Q.

But I don't want to promise that yet, in-case I am not the one to finish the project. If for any reason it is sold or moves on, I lose the power to make that decision, so I don't want to mention it to the Bennett family, but as long as I own it, that is the plan. (I'm sure any new owner would want to honour the heritage anyway). I have no plans of selling, I'm just realistic that these things take time and time changes everything!

Best regards,

(b) (6)

Michael Wyrick MN'08
Member, Board of Directors
Past Vice Chair & Membership Director
Explorers Club Washington Group (ECWG)
Cell: (b) (6)
www.explorers.org

<ECSeal.161001.JPG-4 copy.jpg>

Michael Wyrick, Principal
Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)



From: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
To: ["Michael Wyrick"](#)
Cc: [Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
Subject: RE: checking in on 02608
Date: Thursday, July 18, 2019 8:06:00

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Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
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Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick (b) (6) >
Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2019 10:29 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>
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Best regards,

(b) (6)

Michael Wyrick MN'08
Member, Board of Directors
Past Vice Chair & Membership Director
Explorers Club Washington Group (ECWG)
Cell: (b) (6)
www.explorers.org

<ECSeal.161001.JPG-4 copy.jpg>

From: [Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
To: [Michael Wyrick](#)
Cc: [Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#); [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: RE: LT Bennett's aircraft
Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2020 12:11:16
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Thank you Michael,

I have forwarded this on up to leadership. There appears to be consensus among those expressing a view that they would like to see the remains of the aircraft returned to Texarkana, in a museum, as is.

Very Respectfully,

Alexis

ALEXIS CATSAMBIS PhD RPA

UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY BRANCH

NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

805 Kidder Breese St, SE, Washington, D.C. 20374-5060

Tel: (b) (6) / Email: (b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)

<http://www.history.navy.mil/research/underwater-archaeology.html>

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2020 5:33 PM
To: Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>
Cc: Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>; Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft

Alexis,

If it is of any help, I've attached a pdf with screenshots of the family's responses within a Facebook Group for friends and family of Lt. Bennett.

Best regards,

Michael

On Mar 10, 2020, at 4:23 PM, Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil> wrote:

Good afternoon Michael,

Thank you for your note and for sharing the information below – it is most appreciated and has reached us in time to be referenced in the upcoming meeting.

I am certain Bob will follow up with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Alexis

ALEXIS CATSAMBIS PhD RPA

UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY BRANCH
NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND
805 Kidder Breese St, SE, Washington, D.C. 20374-5060
Tel: (b) (6) / Email: (b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)
<http://www.history.navy.mil/research/underwater-archaeology.html>

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2020 9:30 AM
To: Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA)
<(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>; Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA)
<(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>
Cc: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
(b) (6) [@navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft

Hi Blair and Alexis,

Per Bob's email last week, I wanted to inform you both that to date, I have heard back from 12 members of 2Lt. Wayland Bennett's family and all of them have expressed interest in seeing the plane, if repatriated, sent to his hometown of Texarkana, TX, and put on display at the Texarkana Historical Museum. I have also attached the email I received on Friday from the museum's Board President.

I have encouraged all the family members to write letters to their Congressional members and to the NHHHC. Hopefully, this will show adequate support for the effort of preservation. Can you tell me when your meeting with Rep Graves is scheduled? If later in the week, perhaps we could get you some letters prior to the meeting.

Best regards,

Michael

On Mar 6, 2020, at 8:17 AM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)> wrote:

Hi Michael

Glad to hear you are (b) (6)

Congratulations on (b) (6)

<image001.jpg>

As mentioned we are getting a lot pressure from Rep. Graves of Missouri as he is a flying restored aircraft buff and he is particularly interested in helping a US individual obtain this aircraft for restoration and flight. We also discovered that although DPAA visited site in 1990s and did a recovery that it was cursory and only lasted a few days. A better recovery job could have been redone if this aircraft had not been disturbed.

I will be out of US for next few weeks and will have intermittent email access. Please copy Alexis and Blair on what you find out as there is a meeting with Rep Graves this week.

All the Best

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>

Sent: Thursday, March 05, 2020 7:36 PM

To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)

<(b) (6)@navy.mil>

Cc: Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA)

<(b) (6)@navy.mil>; Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC
WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>

Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft

Bob,

My apologies, I owe you a response on this from some time back.

(b) (6) been distracted as (b) (6)

(b) (6) soon after we last spoke and I dropped the ball on this.

Will follow up on this right away with the family and museum as discussed and get back to you. Thanks for your patience.

Best regards,

Michael

Michael Wyrick | Principal

Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Mobile: (b) (6)



On Mar 5, 2020, at 9:50 AM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)> wrote:

Michael

We have not spoken in a while. If you have time to talk, I would like to update you on what is occurring with BUNO 02608. A Congressman would like Navy to abandon this aircraft so a warbird restorer could purchase and restore it to a flying aircraft. We would be interested to know how the family would react to this, if there were interest in the aircraft being in a museum instead, or would prefer some other disposition.

v/r

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060

Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

Michael Wyrick, Principal
Global Associates, LLC
(b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

<image002.png>

Michael Wyrick, Principal
Global Associates, LLC
(b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)



From: [Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
To: [Michael Wyrick: Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
Cc: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
Subject: RE: LT Bennett's aircraft
Date: Tuesday, March 10, 2020 16:23:31
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)
[image002.png](#)

Good afternoon Michael,

Thank you for your note and for sharing the information below – it is most appreciated and has reached us in time to be referenced in the upcoming meeting.

I am certain Bob will follow up with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Alexis

ALEXIS CATSAMBIS PhD RPA

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NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND
805 Kidder Breese St, SE, Washington, D.C. 20374-5060
Tel: (b) (6) / Email: (b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)
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Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2020 9:30 AM
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Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Sent: Thursday, March 05, 2020 7:36 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) (b) (6) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>
Cc: Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) (b) (6) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>; Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft

Bob,

My apologies, I owe you a response on this from some time back.

(b) (6) been distracted as (b) (6) soon after we last spoke and I dropped the ball on this.

Will follow up on this right away with the family and museum as discussed and get back to you. Thanks for your patience.

Best regards,

Michael

Michael Wyrick | Principal

Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Mobile: (b) (6)



On Mar 5, 2020, at 9:50 AM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)

(b) (6) navy.mil> wrote:

Michael

We have not spoken in a while. If you have time to talk, I would like to update you on what is occurring with BUNO 02608. A Congressman would like Navy to abandon this aircraft so a warbird restorer could purchase and restore it to a flying aircraft. We would be interested to know how the family would react to this, if there were interest in the aircraft being in a museum instead, or would prefer some other disposition.

v/r

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.

Branch Head

Underwater Archaeology Branch

Naval History and Heritage Command

805 Kidder Breese St, SE

Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060

Office: (b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)

Michael Wyrick, Principal

Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)



From: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
To: ["Michael Wyrick"](#)
Subject: RE: LT Bennett's aircraft
Date: Friday, March 06, 2020 15:07:00
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Thank you Michael. Headed out on an interesting project if Corona doesn't cancel it.

Will fill you in when I am back.

All the Best

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Sent: Friday, March 06, 2020 2:48 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft

Thanks for sharing that, Bob. I completely understand and will keep that with us.

By the way, I've already heard back from three family members who have expressed interest in seeing the plane ultimately reach the museum in Texarkana. I'll coordinate with them to draft letters as you and I had previously discussed.

God speed next week!

On Mar 6, 2020, at 2:26 PM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil> wrote:

Michael

That info about the recovery being cursory is a back channel DPAA observation that I probably should not repeat. My understanding is they only had 2 or 3 days and did not have an archaeologist with them. Also done in 1990s and they do a more thorough job now.

So might use your judgement on passing that on.

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breeze St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Sent: Friday, March 06, 2020 12:25 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
(b) (6) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>
Cc: Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA)
<(b) (6)@navy.mil>; Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA)
<(b) (6)@navy.mil>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft

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Thank you again for following this up with me. I regret that I let more time pass on this, but hopefully we can generate enough interest quickly to give you a broader picture before your meeting.

I wish you safe and adventurous travels over the next few weeks and look forward to catching on your return.

Best regards,

Michael

On Mar 6, 2020, at 8:17 AM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN

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wrote:

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Congratulations on (b) (6)

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I will be out of US for next few weeks and will have intermittent email access. Please copy Alexis and Blair on what you find out as there is a meeting with Rep Graves this week.

All the Best

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: 202-685-0897
Cell: 202-500-9974

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6) >
Sent: Thursday, March 05, 2020 7:36 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>
Cc: Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>; Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: LT Bennett's aircraft

Bob,

My apologies, I owe you a response on this from some time back.

Just landed from Istanbul... been distracted as my company was awarded a DLA fuel contract in Iraq soon after we last spoke and I dropped the ball on this.

Will follow up on this right away with the family and museum as discussed and get back to you. Thanks for your patience.

Best regards,

Michael

Michael Wyrick | Principal

Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Mobile: (b) (6)



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v/r

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Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
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805 Kidder Breese St, SE

Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060

Office: (b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)

Michael Wyrick, Principal

Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

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<image001.png>

Michael Wyrick, Principal

Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)



From: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
To: ["Michael Wyrick"](#)
Subject: RE: LT Bennett's aircraft
Date: Friday, March 06, 2020 14:26:00
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

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All the Best

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805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>

Sent: Thursday, March 05, 2020 7:36 PM

To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)

<(b) (6)@navy.mil>

Cc: Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHH C WASHINGTON DC (USA)

<(b) (6)@navy.mil>; Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHH C WASHINGTON DC (USA)

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Office: (b) (6)

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(b) (6)

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Cc: [Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#); [Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
Subject: RE: LT Bennett's aircraft
Date: Friday, March 06, 2020 14:22:00
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Hi Michael

Thank you for your help with this. Let's get together at Explorers Club for a drink and a chat.

Best

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
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805 Kidder Breese St, SE

Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060

Office: (b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)

Michael Wyrick, Principal

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(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)



From: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
To: ["Michael Wyrick"](#)
Cc: [Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#); [Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC \(USA\)](#)
Subject: RE: LT Bennett's aircraft
Date: Friday, March 06, 2020 8:16:00

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(b) (6)

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Cc: Atcheson, Meredith B CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>; Catsambis, Alexis CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>
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(b) (6)

Mobile: (b) (6)



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<(b) (6)@navy.mil> wrote:

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Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
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Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: [Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM \(USA\)](#)
To: ["Michael Wyrick"](#)
Subject: RE: Vanuatu Aircraft
Date: Wednesday, July 17, 2019 15:12:00
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Michael

Thank you for the quick reply. Yes, we believe it is the same aircraft and it apparently is up for sale by an American firm in Illinois. We are trying to determine if it is physically in the U.S. or still in Victoria and if this firm is the owner or the broker. Below is the link we have:

<http://courtesyaircraft.com/aircraft/vought-sikorski-f4u-1-birdcage-corsair-project-package/>

I would appreciate your thoughts.

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
Underwater Archaeology Branch
Naval History and Heritage Command
805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>
Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2019 2:20 PM
To: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6)@navy.mil>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Vanuatu Aircraft

Hi Bob,

Great to hear from you, my friend.

I assume you're referring to Bu 02608 Corsair F4U-1 (2LT Wayland Bennett's plane)?

If so, I haven't heard if there has been any change, but will send a message to the guy who had purchased it from the museum in Adelaide. Last reported (May 2018) it was still in his storage container in Victoria.

Let me know your thoughts on this or if you're referring to another a/c that Agustin had inquired about.

All the best,

Michael

On Jul 17, 2019, at 1:18 PM, Neyland, Robert S CIV USN
NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)> wrote:

Dear Michael

It has been awhile since we talked. I am emailing you to see if you have any new information regarding the aircraft that was recovered from Vanuatu and sold to an individual in Australia and now is for sale in the U.S. We are trying to look into this and determine a course of action.

Any insights you might have would be useful.

All the Best

Bob

Robert S. Neyland, Ph.D.
Branch Head
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805 Kidder Breese St, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060
Office: (b) (6)
Cell: (b) (6)

Michael Wyrick, Principal
Global Associates, LLC

(b) (6)

Cell: (b) (6)



From: Cox, Samuel J SES USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (US) <(b) (6) navy.mil>
Date: Thursday, Apr 09, 2020, 3:29 PM
To: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6)>

Cc: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6) [redacted] navy.mil>, Velvet Hall Cool <boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org>, Lundstrom, Thomas J CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6) [redacted] navy.mil>
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608

Thanks Michael. I appreciate the heads up.
We've already heard from Congressman Bergman's office. Please keep the line of communication open.

Sincerely,

Sam

Samuel Cox
RADM, USN (ret)
Director, Naval History and Heritage Command
(b) (6) [redacted] office
(b) (6) [redacted] govt cell
Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6) [redacted]>
Date: Thursday, Apr 09, 2020, 3:16 PM
To: Cox, Samuel J SES USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (US) <(b) (6) [redacted] navy.mil>
Cc: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA) <(b) (6) [redacted] navy.mil>, Velvet Hall Cool <boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org>, Lundstrom, Thomas J CIV USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <(b) (6) [redacted] navy.mil>
Subject: Re: [Non-DoD Source] US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608

Admiral Cox,

I just wanted to let you know that since we last communicated, eighteen members of 2LT Bennett's family have sent emails to their members of Congress and asked them to send a pre-drafted letter to the Acting Secretary of the Navy. Many of them have received positive responses from the chiefs of staff and/or legislative directors whom claim to have made inquiries to the Navy regarding 02608.

These congressional members include:

1. Rep. Randy Weber
2. Rep. Lloyd Doggett
3. Rep. Kevin Hern
4. Rep. Chellie Pingree
5. Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester
6. Rep. Marcia Fudge
7. Speaker Nancy Pelosi
8. Rep. Jenniffer González-Colón
9. Rep. John Ratcliffe
10. Rep. Don Beyer
11. Rep. Jack Bergman (Retired Lt. General, USMC)
12. Sen. Todd Young (former USMC intel officer)

I just didn't want any of your staff to be blindsided should any inquiries make their way to your command.

Respectfully,

Michael

On Apr 2, 2020, at 11:18 AM, Cox, Samuel J SES USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (US)
<(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)> wrote:

Dear Mr. Wyrick, Thank you very much for your note. It remains the position of the US Navy that the aircraft remains the property of the US Navy department despite its present circumstances. We are under some significant pressure from one Congressman to "divest" the aircraft so it can be restored to flying condition. This would have to be a decision by the Secretary of the Navy. There are some positives to doing so but also many negative consequences and bad precedents, some of which you clearly articulate in your note. Your note is timely and much appreciated and will be used in the decision brief that will go to the Secretary of the Navy. Right now that is being coordinated among a number of Navy, Marine, DOD and other federal agencies that have a stake in this very complex issue. I am not permitted to lobby Congress one way or another, however I might suggest that gaining some Congressional support might be useful to your position. It is my primary desire that the sacrifice of 2LT Bennett be appropriately respected and remembered.

Sincerely,

Sam

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: Michael Wyrick <(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>>
Date: Wednesday, Apr 01, 2020, 7:21 PM
To: Cox, Samuel J SES USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (US)
<(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>>
Cc: Neyland, Robert S CIV USN NAVHISTHERITAGECOM (USA)
<(b) (6) [navy.mil](mailto:(b) (6)@navy.mil)>>, Board President Texarkana
Museums
<boardpresident@texarkanamuseums.org>>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] US Navy Corsair BuNo. 02608

Samuel J. Cox
RADM, USN (retired)
Director of Naval History
Curator for the Navy
Director, Naval History and Heritage Command

Dear Admiral Cox,

I am writing to you today to seek your support in preserving the remains of a United States Navy/Marine Corps aircraft which crashed in 1943, tragically taking the life of its young aviator and serving as his sacred tomb for the next 51 years. WWII Marine fighter pilot, 2Lt. Wayland Edward Bennett, USMCR, was missing but never forgotten.

- * Aircraft: F4U-1 Corsair, US Navy BuNo 02608 (VMF-214 “Black Sheep”)
- * Aviator: 2Lt. Wayland Edward Bennett, USMCR
- * Crash Date: 22OCT43
- * Crash Site: Espiritu Santo island in the New Hebrides (now, the Republic of Vanuatu)
- * Excavation & Recovery: Conducted by CIL-HI in 1994; aviator’s remains were returned to US and burial ceremony conducted in aviator’s hometown of Texarkana, Texas in 1994

BACKGROUND:

In 1988 and 1989, I had the great honor of serving as a member of two expeditionary teams in search of Lt. Bennett. These search teams were formed by members of his hometown of Texarkana, Texas & Arkansas. Our search was conducted in the Republic of Vanuatu with the full cooperation and at the direction of the aviator’s family members and friends.

In 1994, six years and four expeditions later, the aircraft was ultimately uncovered by local loggers which notified our team leader, who then informed the US Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CIL-HI). CIL-HI dispatched a team to the islands to conduct an excavation of the site that same year and return Lt. Bennett’s remains to Texarkana for a proper military burial.

After 51 years, Lt. Bennett was returning home to the United States. His return was ceremoniously marked by a parade down the main street in our hometown. A caisson carrying his flag draped coffin was flanked by U.S. Marines, veterans, and search team members and was carried to where he would be laid to rest beside generations of his family who had preceded him in death. Sadly, this included the aviator’s twin sister, who had provided moral and financial support to the search team and lived just long enough to learn that her brother was found, yet she passed away before his remains were repatriated. As a bugle sounded Taps in the distance, Lt. Bennett’s former squadron, VMF-214, conducted a salute in the form of a burial flyover in missing man formation.

In 2015, on a return to Vanuatu as a disaster relief volunteer, I reconnected with local villagers whom had assisted our teams’ expeditions in the 80s and 90s. During the visit, a missionary informed me that an Australian private museum owner had recently negotiated a deal to purchase and excavate the fuselage of Lt. Bennett’s Corsair from the jungle. This Corsair, which Lt. Bennett affectionately named “Susie-Q” (after his mother) was crated, shipped and later displayed in this private museum while being used to aid in the construction of a replica Corsair fighter.

After making contact with the museum’s owner, I learned that the fuselage was only being used as reference for their project and afterward it would be sold to recover expenses. The museum owner assured me that no parts were being removed from the aircraft and even expressed interest in seeing it repatriated to the United States one day, where members of Lt. Bennett’s family and community could frequently visit it. I immediately reached out to the Bennett family to keep them apprised. Unfortunately, it was instead sold to another Australian collector only to be stored inside a shipping container for the next several years.

This current collector in possession of “Susie-Q” claims to be negotiating a sale to a collector/restorer in the United States. My concern, and the concern of many of Lt. Bennett’s family members with whom I have corresponded, is that ‘restoration’ or private collection could see this aircraft significantly altered to the point that it loses its integrity and no longer appears as 2Lt. Bennett’s aircraft and memorializes his sacrifice. Also, with the possibility of it being flown, it could crash again further adding to the family’s hardship. We instead feel that the appropriate place for this plane, since already disturbed from its resting place in Vanuatu, should therefore be in a proper museum.

REQUEST:

Admiral Cox, I respectfully request your assistance in honoring this fallen warrior, his family and his community, by respecting the memory of Lt. Bennett by not allowing the commercial exploitation of the aircraft in which he lost his life. I, therefore, request your assistance in (1) maintaining the Navy’s ownership of this aircraft and (2) seeking cooperation with the Australian government to help secure and return the aircraft to the United States for display in a museum thereby allowing “Susie-Q” to remain in her current state as a ‘symbol of remembrance’ for the sacrifice made by this family’s loved one.

The President of the Board of the Texarkana Museums System in Lt. Bennett’s hometown, Ms. Velvet Hall Cool, (copied) has expressed her Board’s interest in receiving and curating the remains of this aircraft in which this community’s favorite son had been interred for more than half a century, should it find its way back to the United States.

Very Sincerely,

Michael

Michael Wyrick

Team Leader, 1989 Wayland Bennett MIA Search Expedition
Team Member, 1988 Wayland Bennett MIA Search Expedition

Member, NESA World Explorer Program Subcommittee
National Eagle Scout Association

Member, Board of Directors / Past Vice Chair / Past Membership Director
Explorers Club Washington Group
The Explorers Club (Founded 1904)
Cell: (b) (6)

www.explorers.org<http://www.explorers.noclick_org>

Congressional Tributes:

* US Rep. Steve Largent’s Floor Speech Tribute to 2Lt. Wayland Bennett: <https://www.congress.gov/104/crec/1995/05/24/CREC-1995-05-24-pt1-PgE1107.pdf><https://www.congress.noclick_gov/104/crec/1995/05/24/CREC-1995-05-24-pt1-PgE1107.pdf>

* US Senator Dale Bumpers’s Floor Speech Tribute to 2Lt. Wayland

Bennett: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1994-pt21/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1994-pt21-6-1.pdf><https://www.govinfo.noclick_gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1994-pt21/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1994-pt21-6-1.pdf>

Museum Interested in Receiving and Curating Lt. Bennett's Corsair (02608):

* Texarkana Museums System:
<http://www.texarkanamuseum.org><http://www.texarkanamuseum.noclick_org>

(You may either click the links, or copy and paste URL into your own browser to securely view.)

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